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A Facade for San Lorenzo

Rod Barker

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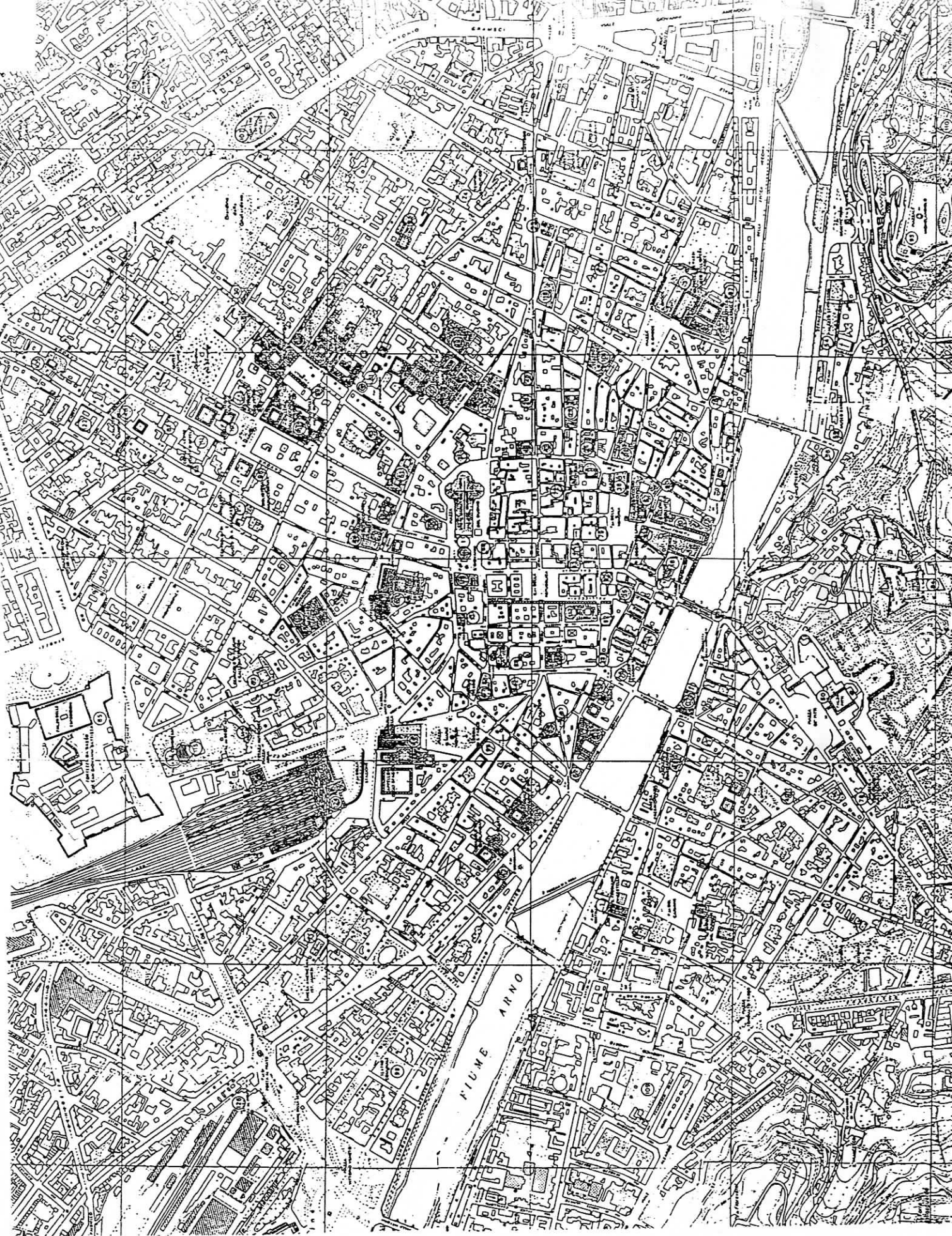
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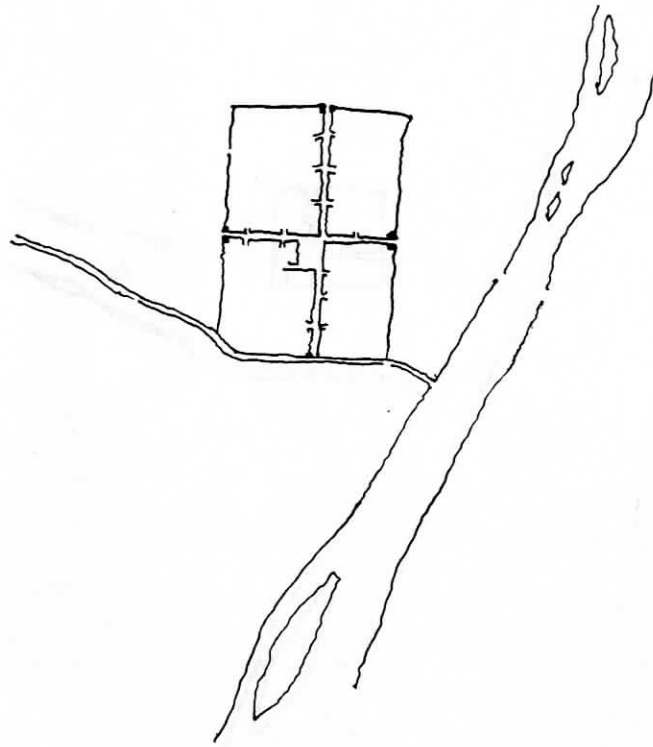
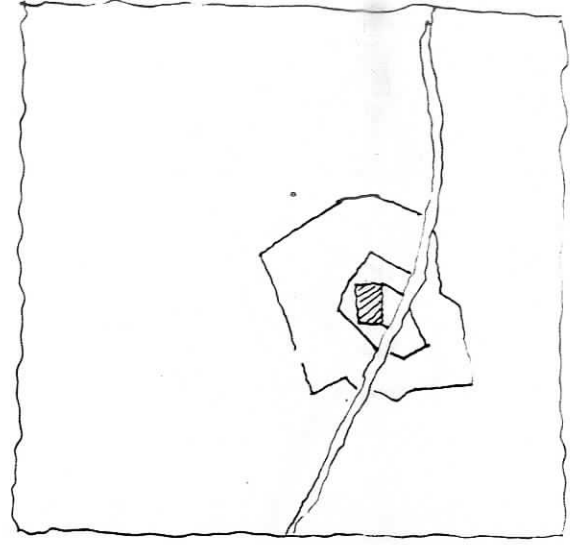
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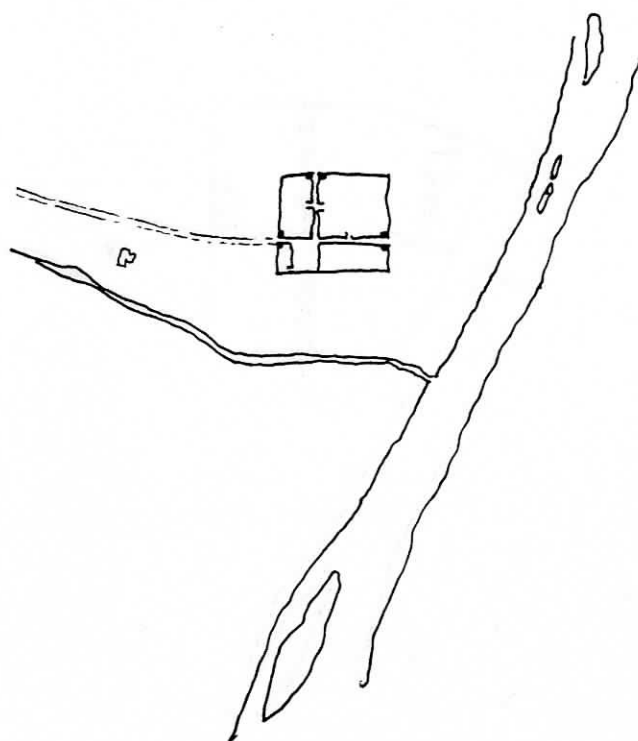
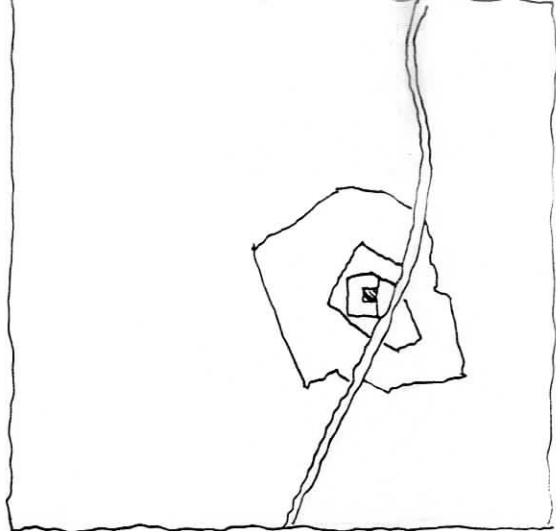
A Facade for San Lorenzo
Rod Barker
Dec. 10, 1992
Thesis Prep.

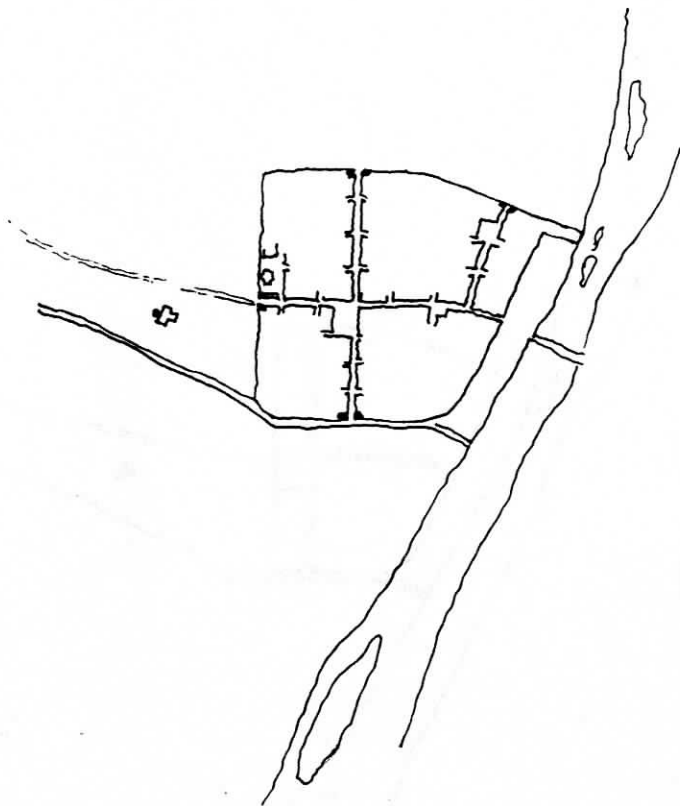
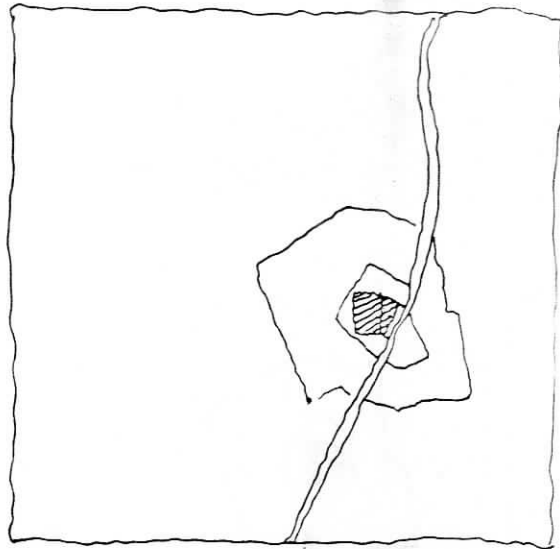
-Florence the city

Florence is a city, like many other cities, that has a rich historical past. This history is quite evident and can be recognized through its structure of streets, piazzas, and major monuments. It is particularly interesting to view the city in two ways. The first is to recognize how the city was formed through history, starting with the Roman core and discover the city's contraction and expansion over time from its placement of monuments, public spaces, organization of its streets, and character of blocks. So if one were dropped off in the center of the city and began to walk to its outer edge the streets, the blocks, the major monumental buildings, and the public spaces all would inform the visitor of the layers of history that form concentric circles around the city center with the Duomo acting as the nucleus. The memories invoked by these layers and how they changed over time are quite powerful.

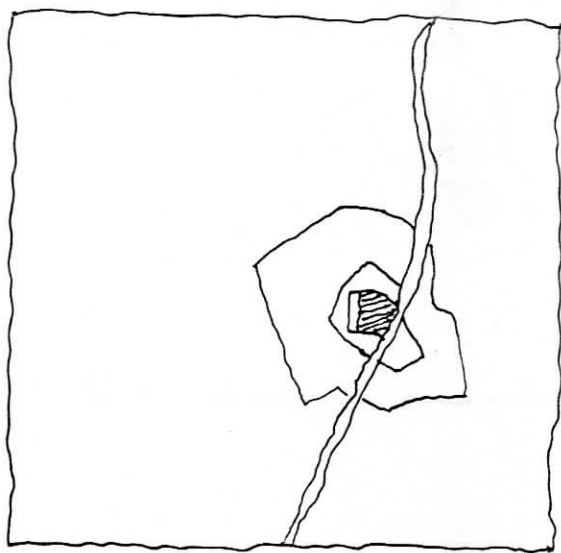
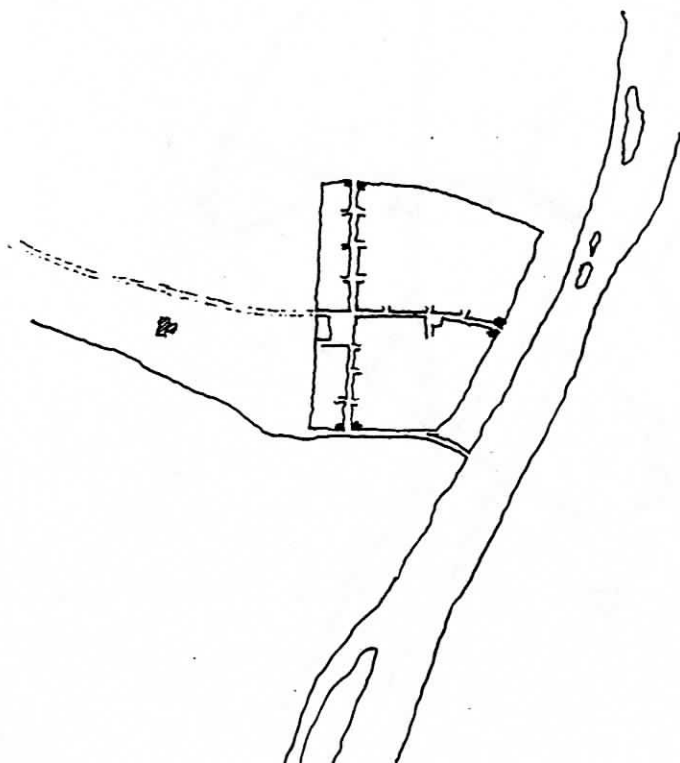


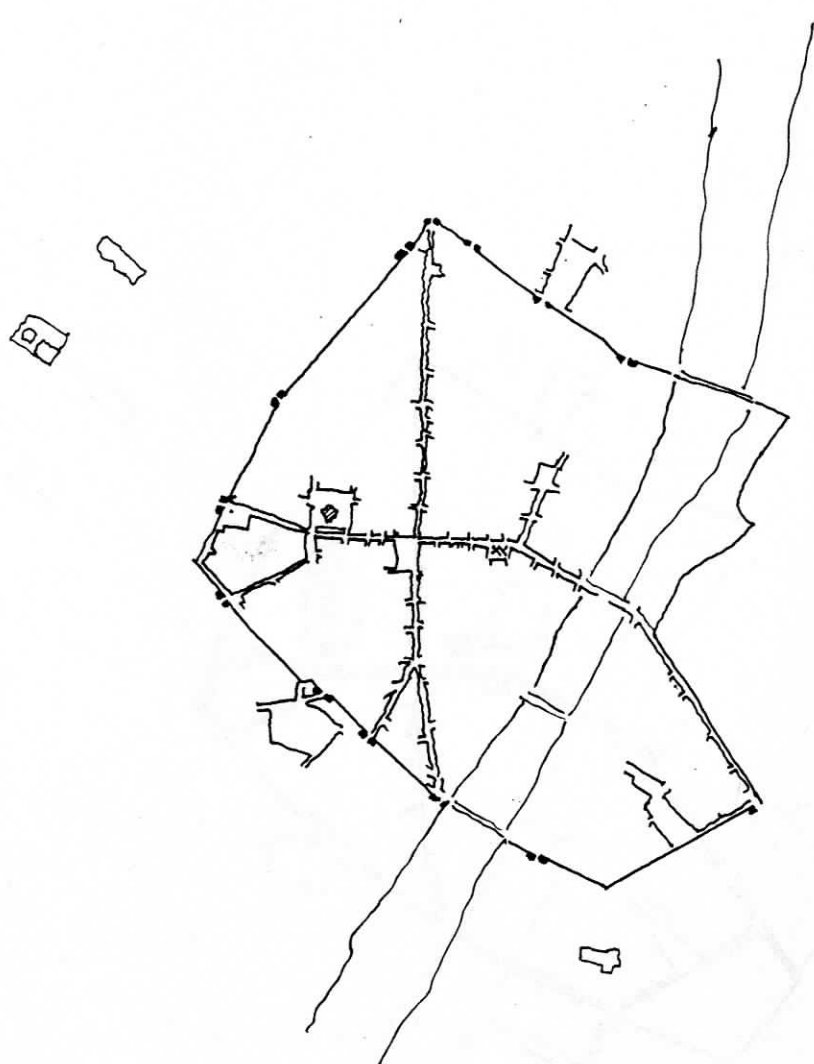
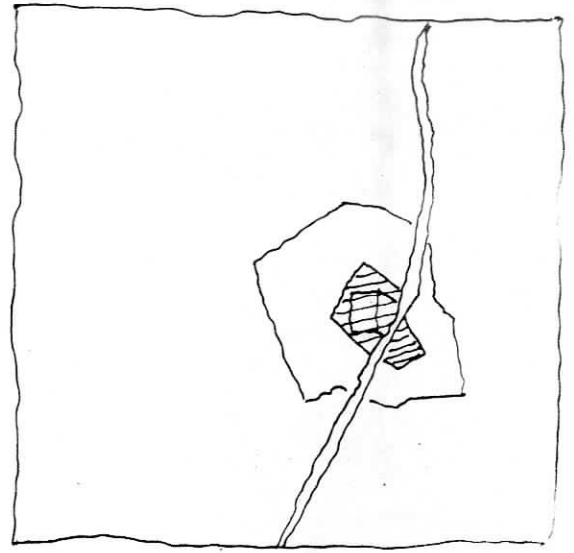




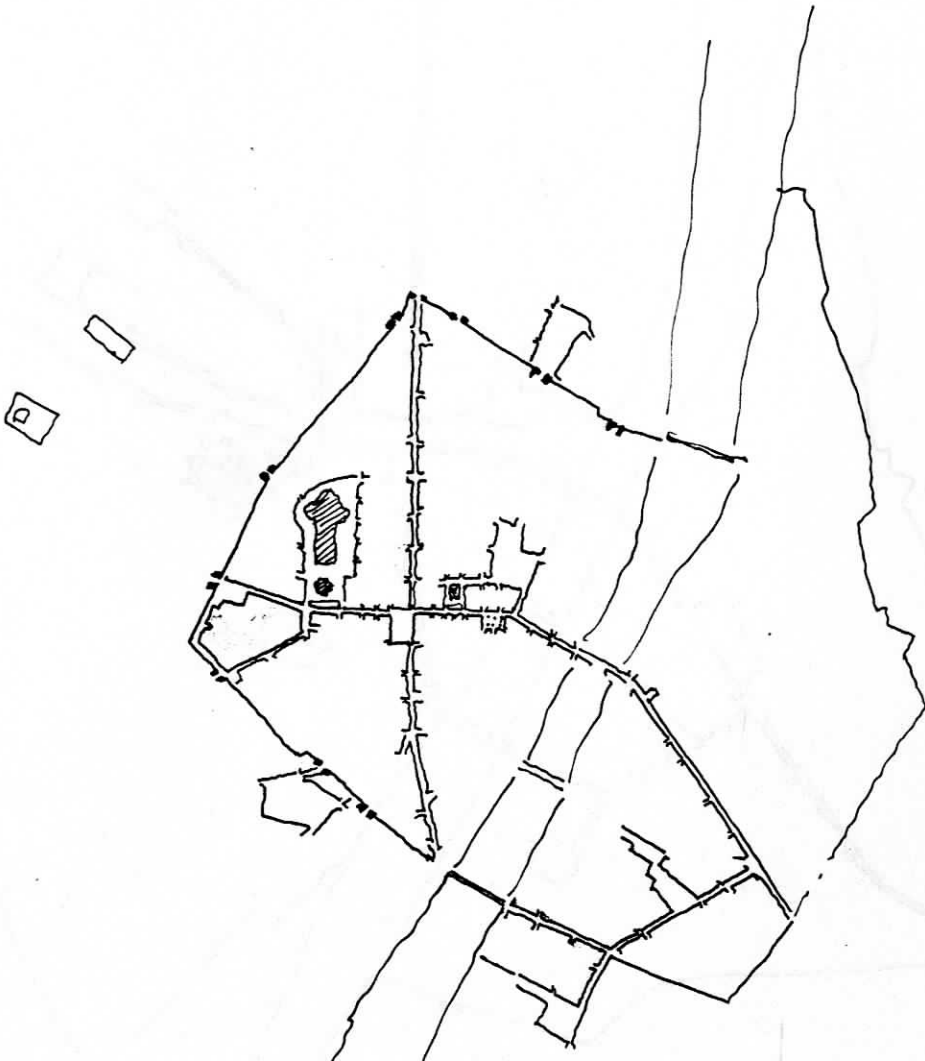
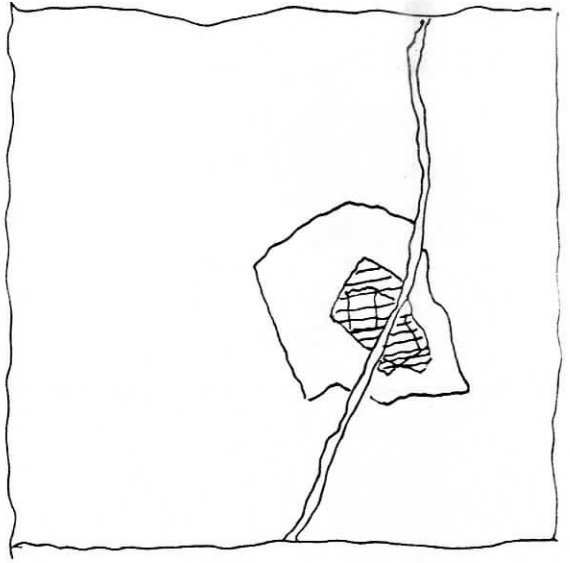


10th CENTURY LAYER

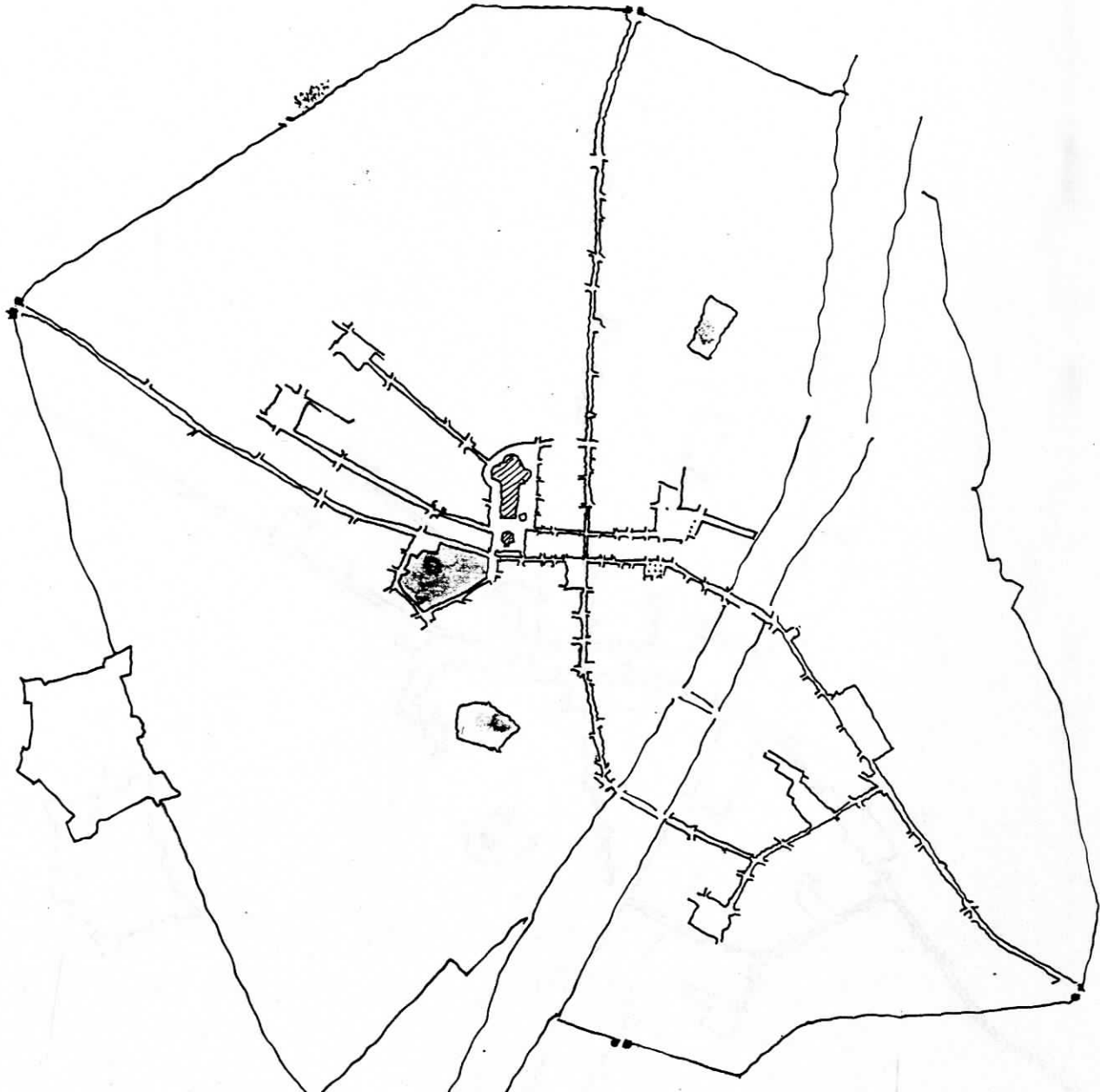
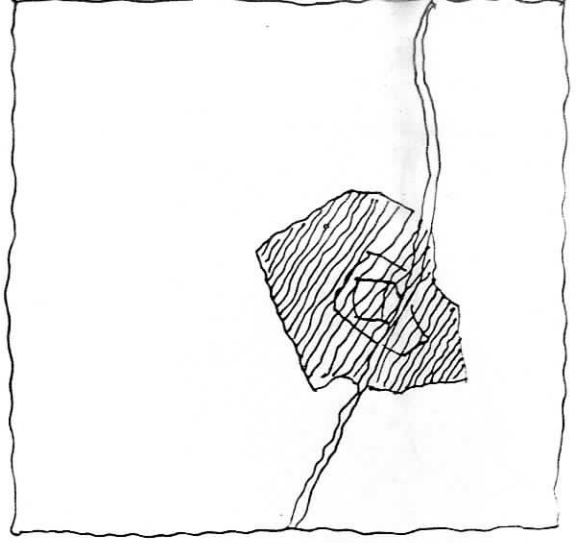




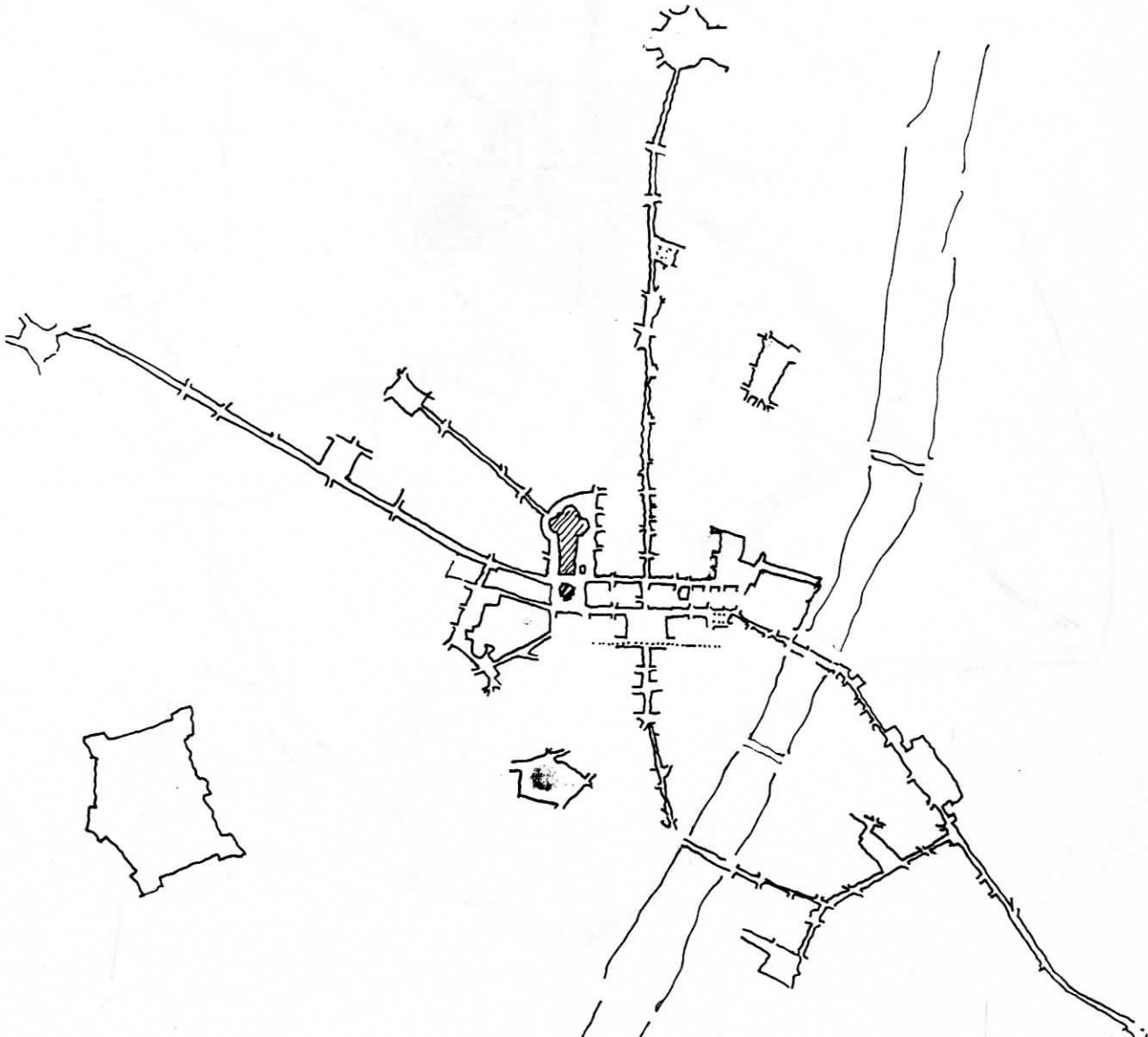
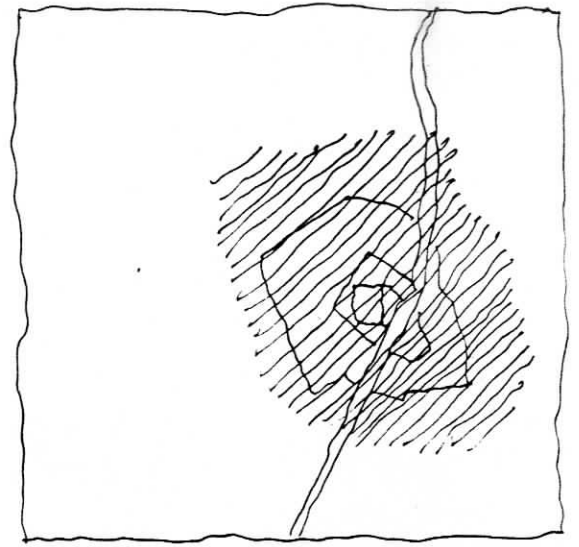
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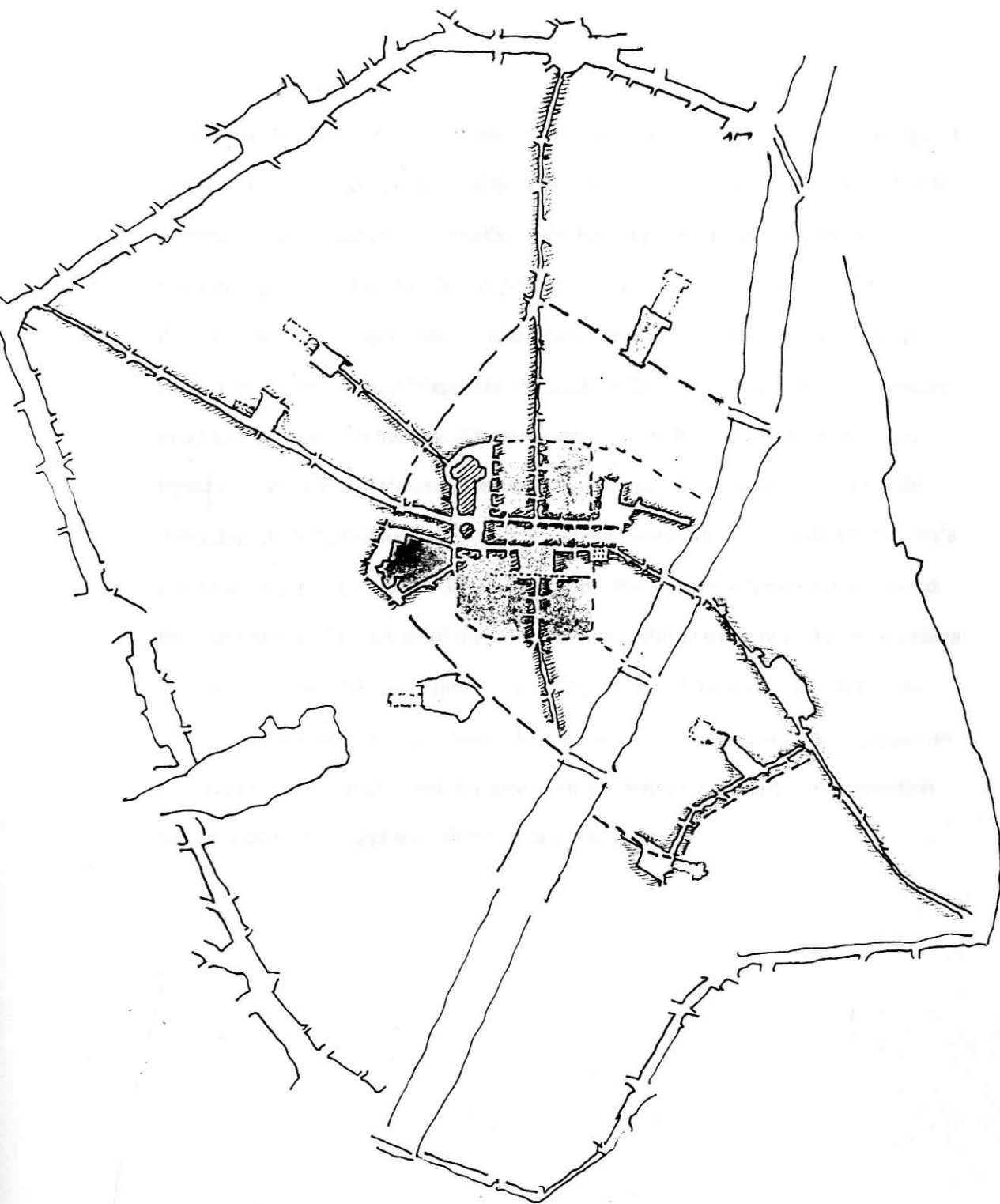
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1832 CAYER

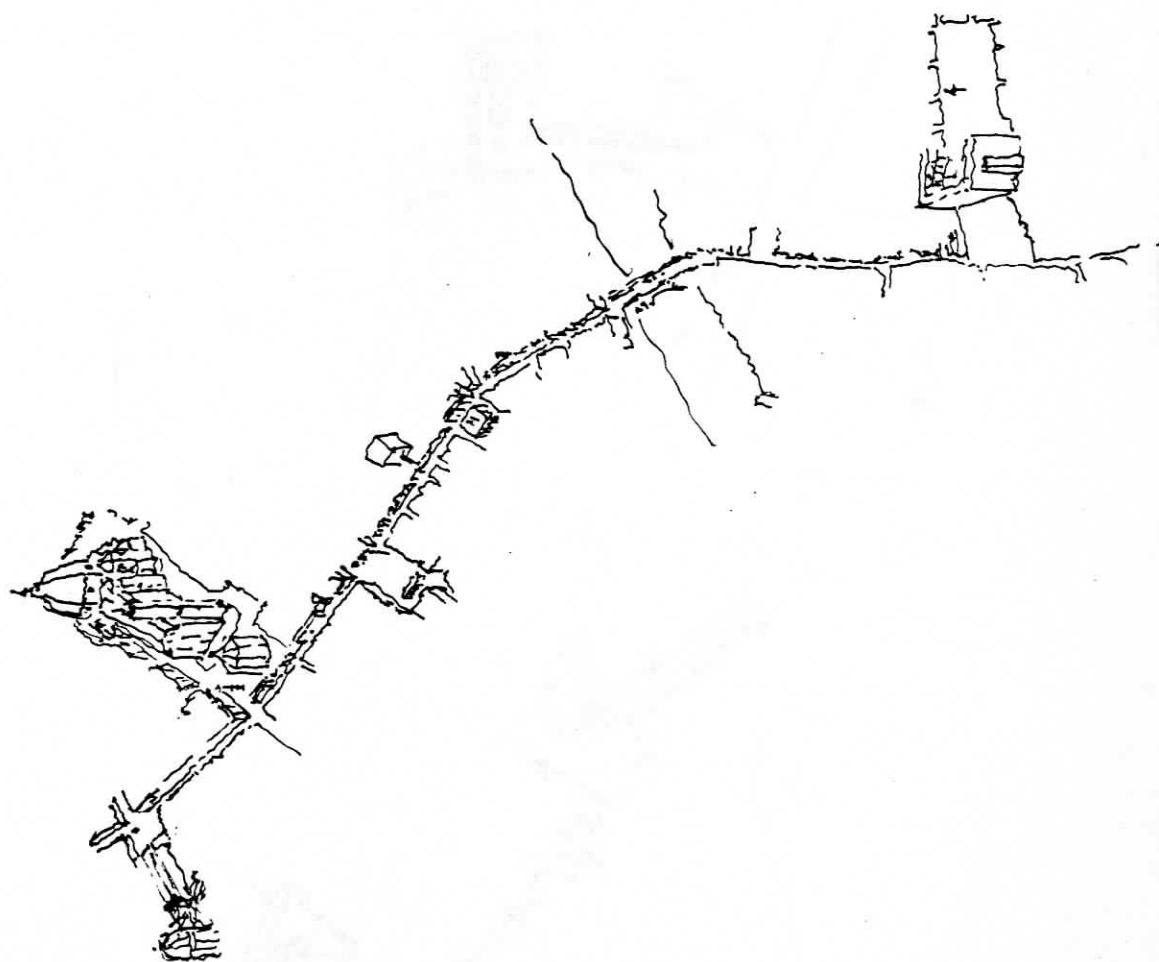
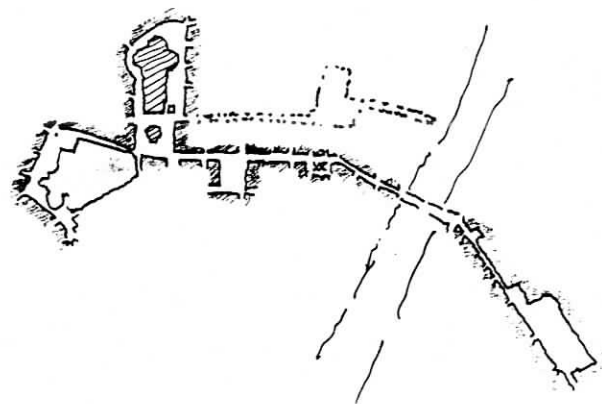


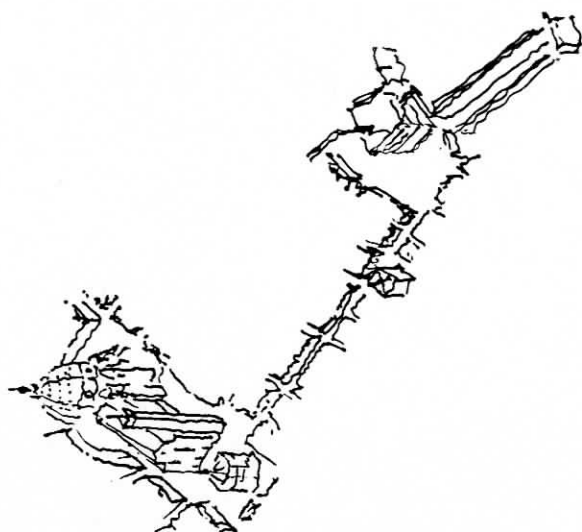
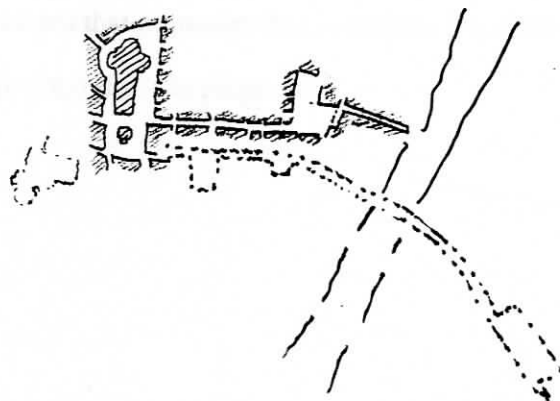
TODAY



LAYERS OF CITY VS. PLACEMENT OF MONUMENT

The second would be the relationship of the important local centers that exist within the city. These centers are a combination of public spaces, major monuments (facade, building, fountain, column as marker, loggia) and the connection between them. The connection exists not only through the physical structure of the city but also through the memory of the relationship between each monumental place. Each place in Florence is then part of another system of hierarchical layers. Existing on the highest level is the Duomo, and because of their relationship, Palazzo Vecchio. Santa Maria Novella and St. Croce exist on another level because of their unique paired relationship within the city. Santo Spirito, San Marco, Santissima Annunziata, Palazzo Pitti, Piazza della Repubblica and San Lorenzo are in the next level down. Santa Trinita, Santa Maria Maggiorie, Piazza Rucellai act as centers for even smaller neighborhoods within the city. These centers begin to form a structure that bind together larger parts of the city dominated by the major monuments, forming the characteristic neighborhoods of Florence. These local centers are related to the city's historical layers as mentioned in the first point. For it is these layers that informed the placement and structure of these local centers. But at some point these two ideas take on their own identity. These centers begin to spark a memory in the visitors mind about the relationship between each monument and the city. These memories are invoked by the monument, the space, the placement in the city, the connection between each place, and the difference between each one.



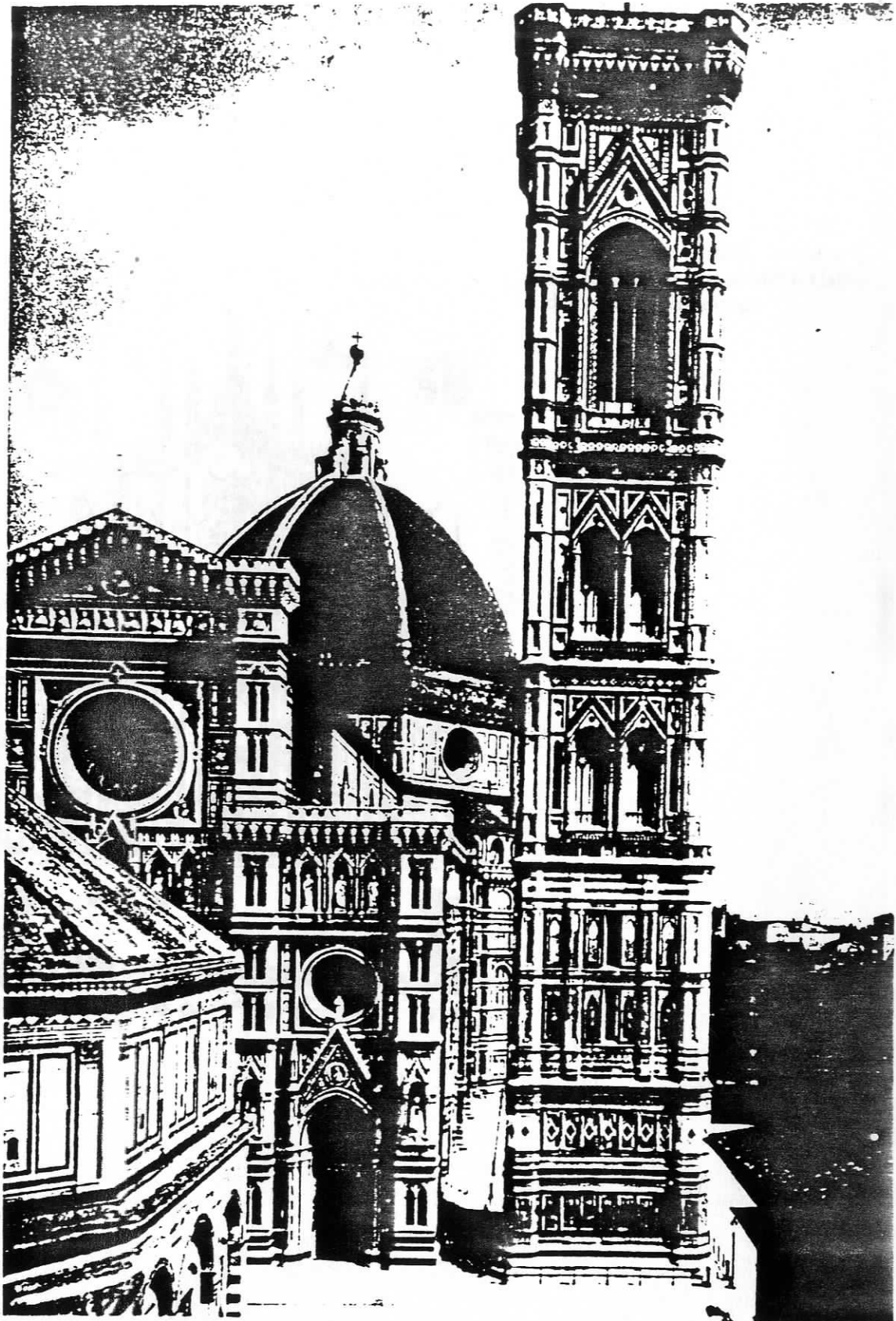


Interjected into these two systems are the alterations that have changed the city's structure, sequence or prominence of a monument. For example the change of the main north south connection through the city from the old cardo (passing by San Lorenzo, to Piazza della Repubblica to the Ponte Vecchio past Palazzo Pitti to Porta Romana) to Via Cavour (passing by Palazzo Medici, to the Duomo, Or San Michele, to Palazzo Vecchio and the Uffizi), the creation of the Uffizi as a public space, and the facade for Santa Maria Novella. All are changes that occurred over time which begin to create an overlap of the historical layers of the city. These changes are in response to existing hierarchical conditions that re-present that hierarchy. Plus this hierarchy has changed and will change if the city is to progress.

-Preservation vs. progress

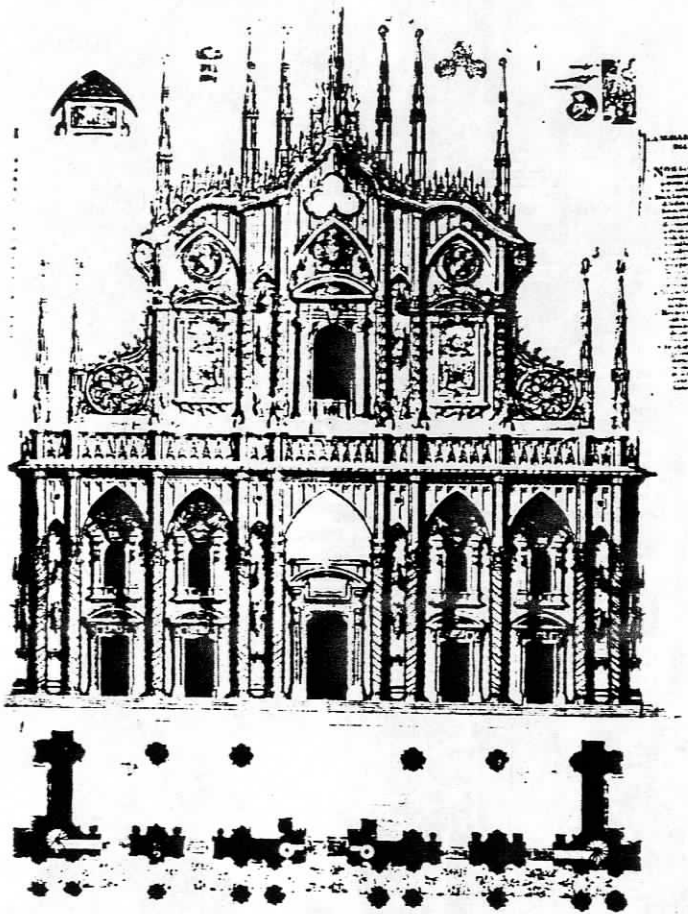
At some point in the history of Florence the balance between preservation and progress began to deteriorate. In the case of the facade for the Duomo, the idea of maintaining harmony with the current building was interpreted to mean continue the gothic language onto the facade. By representing a gothic facade, by preserving that past style, the city is then cut off from the potential to represent the present and re-present the past layers of history or time. This is the mistake of the gothic style facade. The Duomo's construction spanned hundreds of years, but at first glance a visitor would have no idea. There are no signs or symbols that represent the layers of time that span between the construction of the nave and the facade. The same dilemma was present at the Milan Cathedral. There the facades were designed in the gothic style and in the current styles, which lead to the debate of which one was appropriate. There were even proposals that combined the two styles. Francesco Castilli's design for the facade received Bernini's approval because 'the gothic parts should as far as possible, reveal a topological bond with the Roman ones, so there is no clash of styles'¹, and he felt that the Gothic and the Roman (here a re-presentation of the Roman into Renaissance principles) did just that. (fig p.67) The point is that more than one representation of time was needed in order to maintain the harmony of the building.

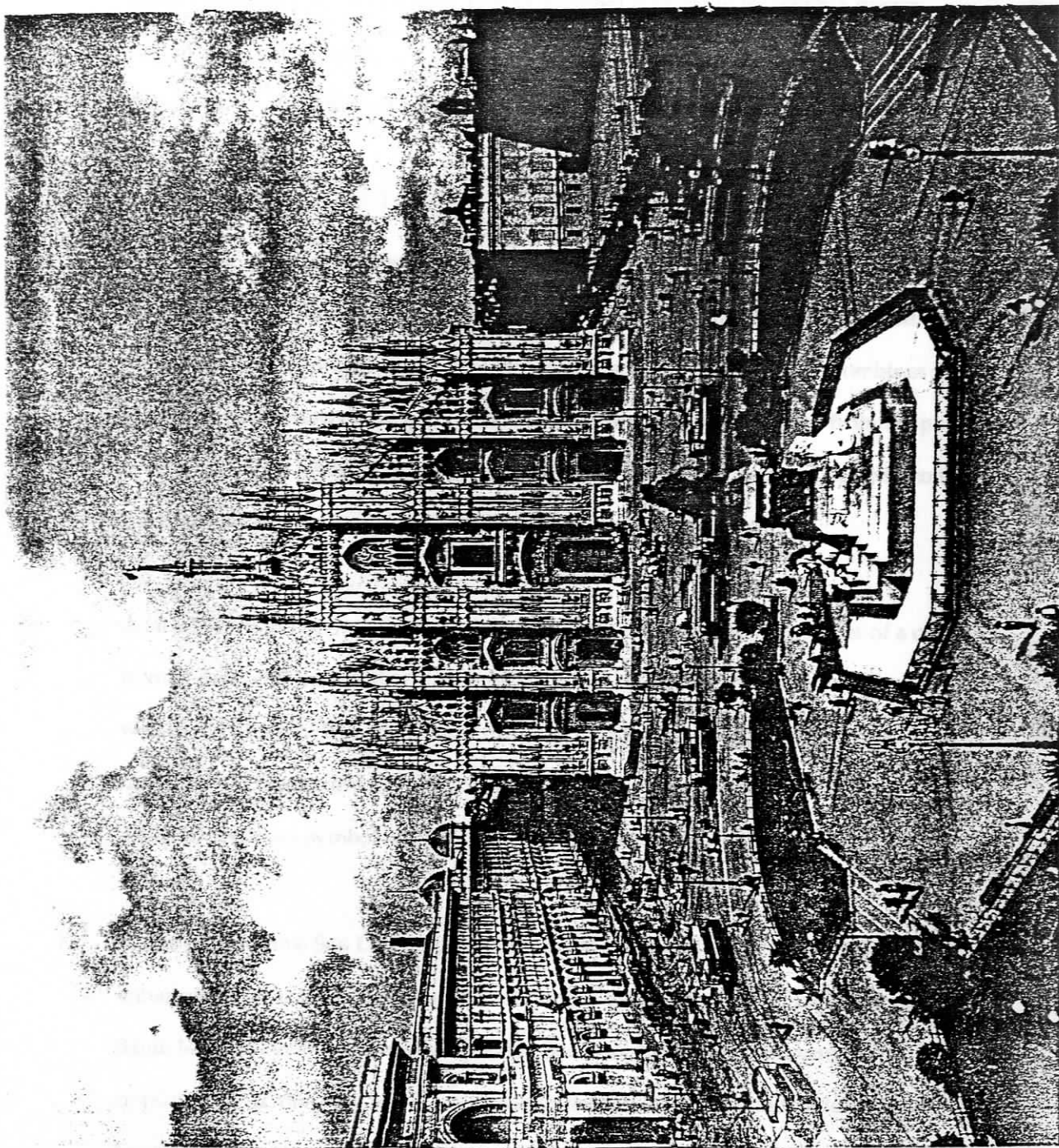
¹Wittkower, R. Gothic vs. Classic. p.57.



Florence Cathedral

Francesco Castelli. Second project for the façade of Milan Cathedral. 1651. Engraving.





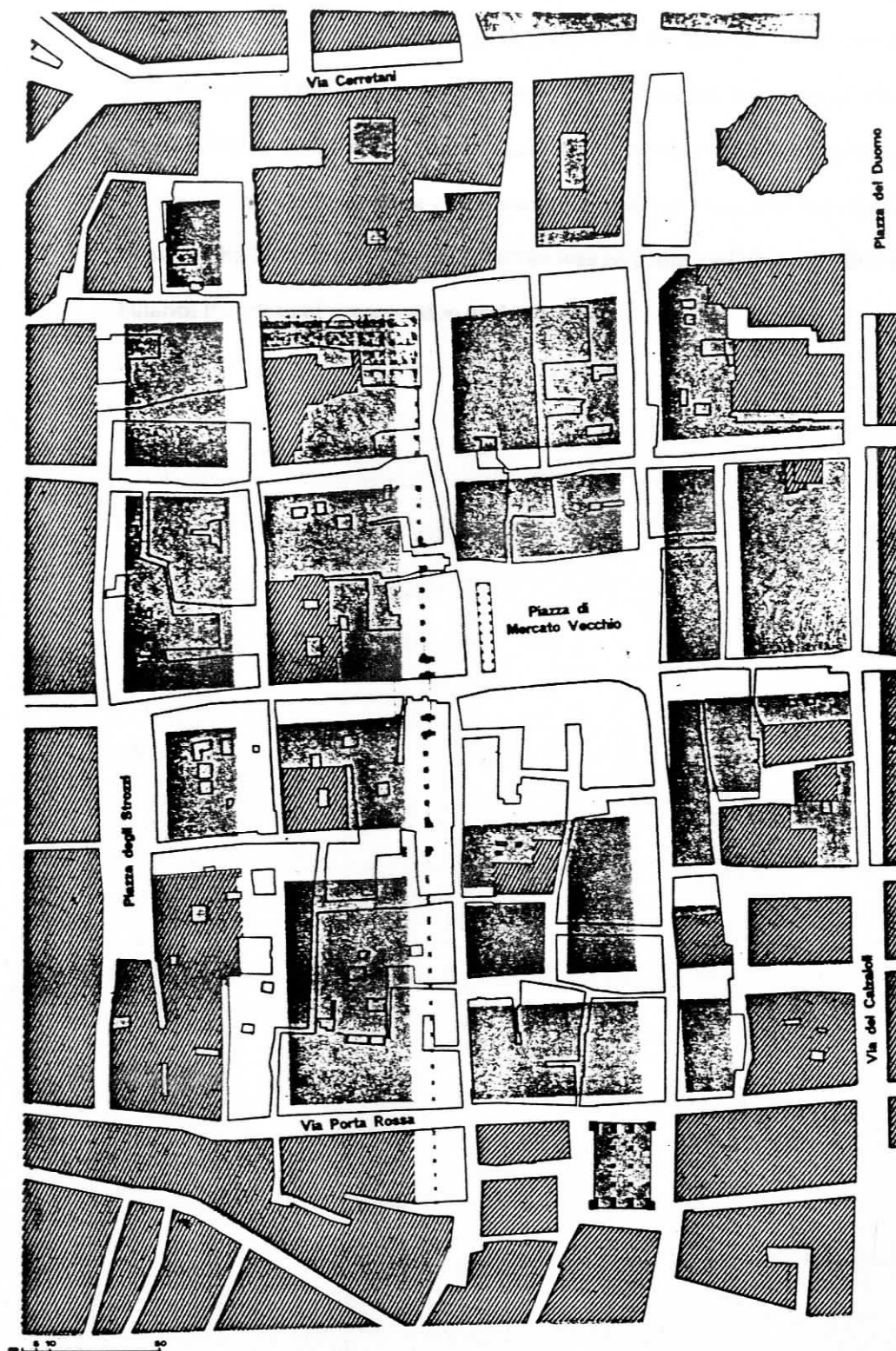
Milan. Piazza and cathedral.

On the other end of the argument are the Poggi interventions of Florence. In the case of Piazza della Repubblica the character of a major public space that was part of the medieval layer of history for the city was removed in order to reference a Roman past. These moves did not, as Alberti would say, reconcile the old with the new. The character of the old piazza was not incorporated into the design of the new piazza.

The Duomo is *the* monument of the city. It is a sign, *the* symbol of the city. How was the Duomo added to in order to expose its historical layers and enhance its position within the city? Brunelleschi builds a dome on a gothic monument that combines the two systems he knows best; gothic and roman. He combines two ideas from the past to solve a unique problem in the present. The problem demanded that he go beyond the time and create a new layer to the building, the city, and history.

A facade for San Lorenzo presents the opportunity to re-examine the issues of a city. It must deal with the existing structure of the city, address its history and past, as well as the present. It needs to have meaning for the citizens and visitors alike, meaning that creates images of the other parts of the city and the particular place. It needs to become a symbol not only for the complex but also for the entire city.

At the present time San Lorenzo, the piazza, and the complex have the potential to be enhanced. Just as Brunelleschi's dome enhanced the Duomo, and Alberti's facade for Santa Maria Novella enhanced the piazza, San Lorenzo presents the same opportunity. In one way San Lorenzo shares the same hierarchical relationship as Santissima Annunziata, Santo Spirito and Santa Carmine



and the large dome of the Medici chapel that is situated behind the main altar of the church gives the complex prominence in the skyline of the city. But as one moves through the city from monument to monument, San Lorenzo becomes a bit obscure. The character of the present facade is strong and does create a sense of place, but its relationship to the other monuments and its placement within the structure of the city has the opportunity to be re-presented (in the same way that the relationship between the Duomo and Palazzo Vecchio was re-presented) in a way that will balance the ideas of preservation and progress.

-Facade

What is a facade? What relationship should it have to the building, its interior, its exterior, the buildings identity in the city? How does the facade interject into the sequence of the city? In what way will the facade enhance the identity of the city? How does the place inform the facade? How does the city inform the facade?

The interior of the church will become very important in order to continue the layering from the interior to the exterior. Not for the simple reason of expressing the interior of a building on the exterior as a good modernist would do. By establishing a link between and the interior and my facade the new layer can extract out of the past (which would be Brunelleschi's church) an image that can inform the present. This facade will then inform the visitor of this particular building, by putting the proper face on a Brunelleschi church.

I picture this facade as a sign. Not a sign that will stand out alone as something very obvious, but a sign that will be part of the structure and symbols of the city. The next question will be what is signified? What meaning will the sign have? To go one step further I must also realize that 'the very essence and source of the meaning is the image pictured in/of/by the metaphor...we witness it rather than the text.'²

So what image do I choose to represent on a facade for San Lorenzo? I believe there are many that could be used. It could be purely religious which would be appropriate for a church, but for such a historical significant church as San Lorenzo,

²Benedikt, M. Deconstructing the Kimbell. p.47

the image must be more. Should the image be the Medici family? I can see both of these images represented in the iconography of the other facades designed for San Lorenzo, but these references seem to be out dated. The city is no longer ruled by the Medici family, and the church now has an important historical significance that goes beyond a religious significance. Would a reference to time be more appropriate? But what period and for how long? Would I choose to represent the entire history of the city, or the entire history of Architecture? The answer to this question is contained within the complex itself. San Lorenzo contains important Architectural artifacts that represent a certain moment in time. Each piece, the Laurentian Library, the old sacristy, the new sacristy, the church, even the facade designed by Michelangelo become a sign of its time, an idea of how space is made and articulated that is unique to that date.

My facade must mark this point in time to create the next layer of time and history for a particular place in a particular city. At the same time, these artifacts fit into a tradition of building that become part of the character of the city. They become part of a system of development of ideas and images that create the character of Florence.



A tradition of church facade making is present in the city. Starting with San Miniato then to Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce and the Duomo; this tradition is evident. Certain materials and motifs are used that establish a relationship from church to church, time to time, and place to place. At the same time these images change to reflect different time periods and different ideas about facade making. My facade must work in the same tradition, and change its image to reflect the next period of time and ideas about facade making. I hope that my facade will inspire other layers of time and history to be added to San Lorenzo and the city to allow the growth of the city to continue.

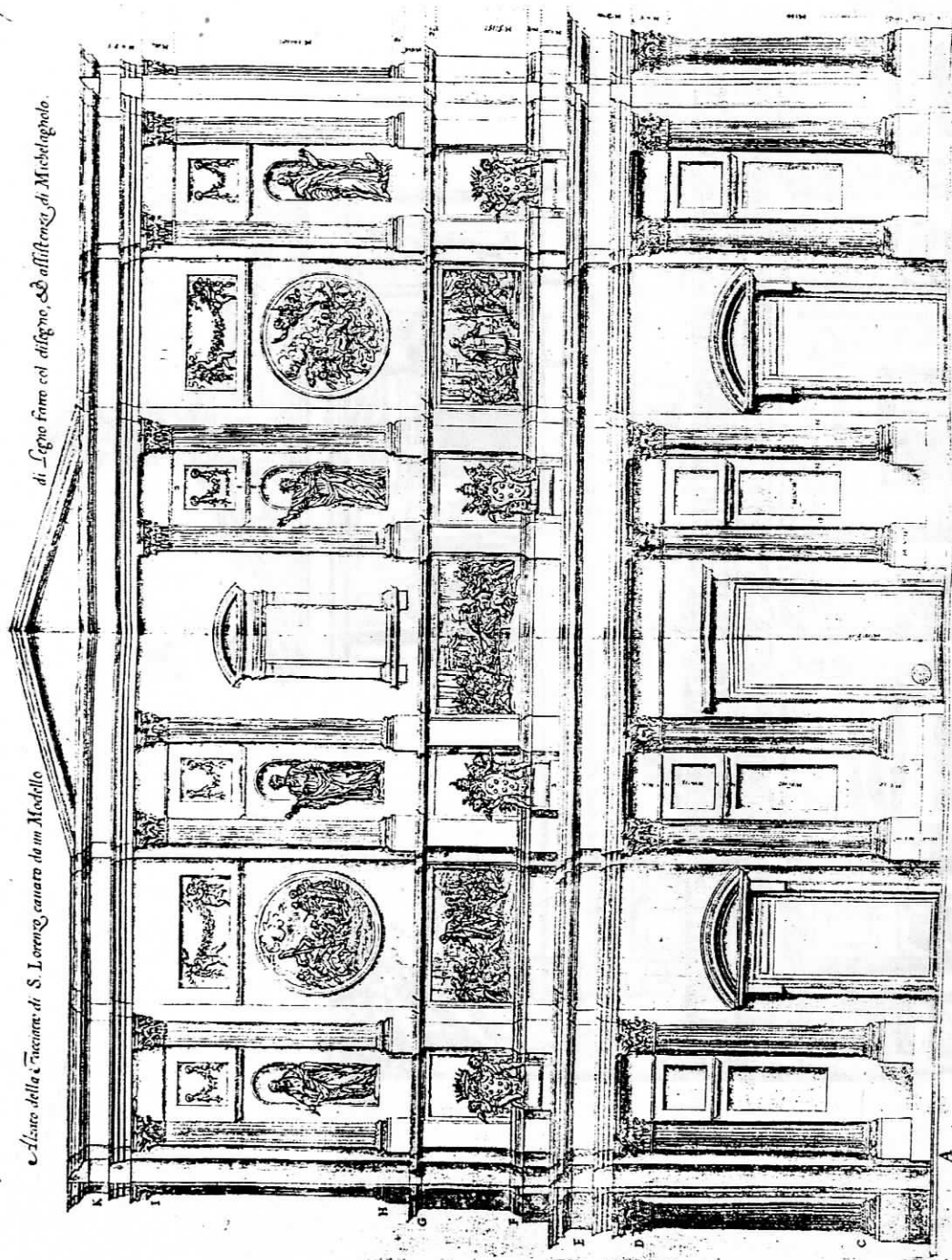
-Program

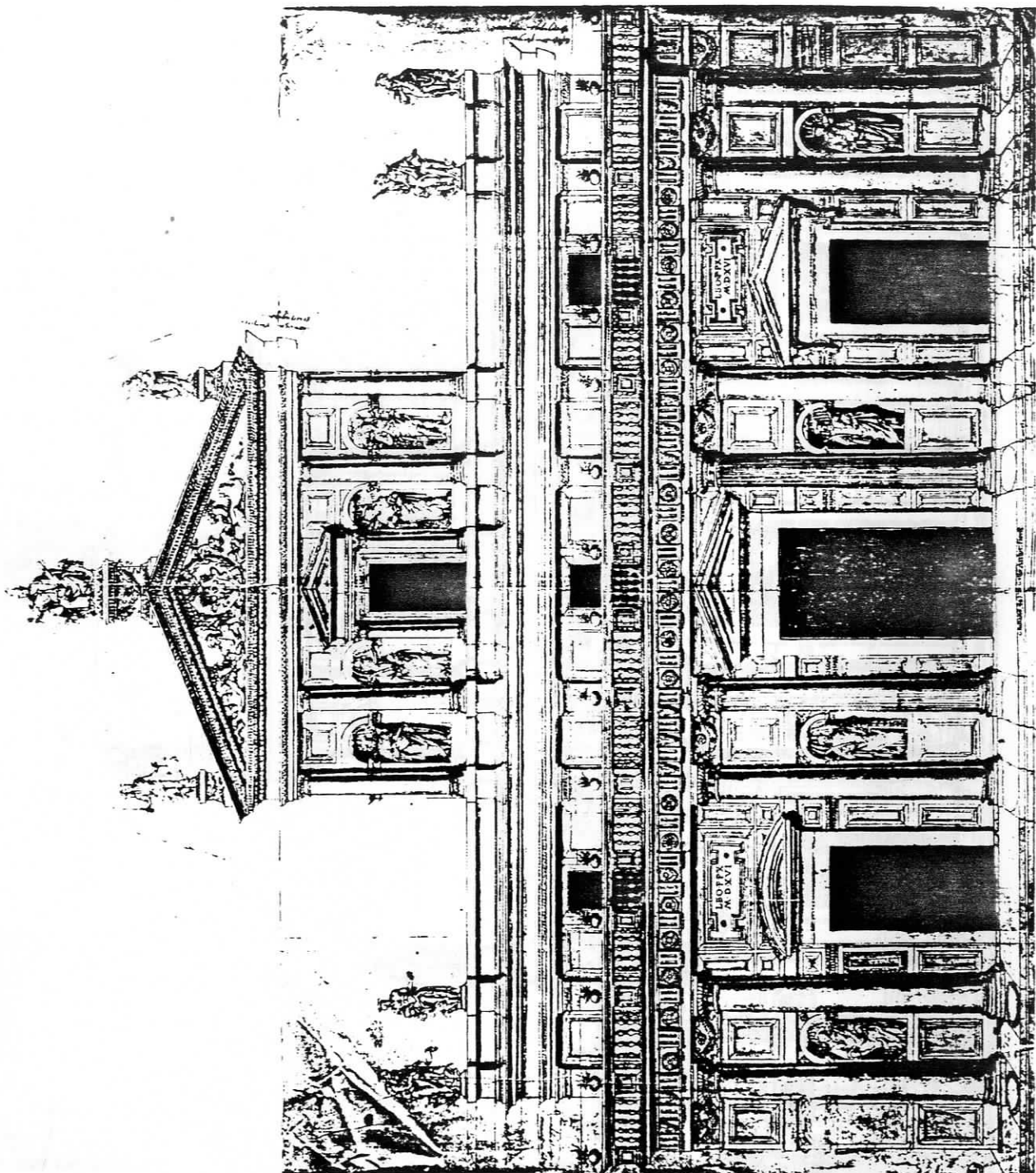
Within this facade a public sequence from the piazza to the Library will allow the visitor to experience this new layer. By occupying the space behind the new facade, one is within a space that is dominated by the current facade with its rough texture, which will remind the visitor of the time lapse between the last intervention and the date of the new facade. Contained within this facade and sequence could be an important artifact that will give hierarchy to the sequence and will add to the representation of time and history. The wooden model of Michelangelo's facade or a piece of his sculpture, an artifact from Roman times or Brunelleschi's lantern from the old sacristy that now sits in the loggia of the old courtyard. Drawings of other facades or artifacts related to San Lorenzo could be displayed. Any display should be part of the experience of viewing the complex. Therefore the main programmatic element will be the stair/ramp that leads to the library. There could also be a separate sequence that brings the public up to a view above the city. A small gift shop or bookstore where one could buy drawings or other publications of the complex would bring the smaller gift shop out of the church and make it much more

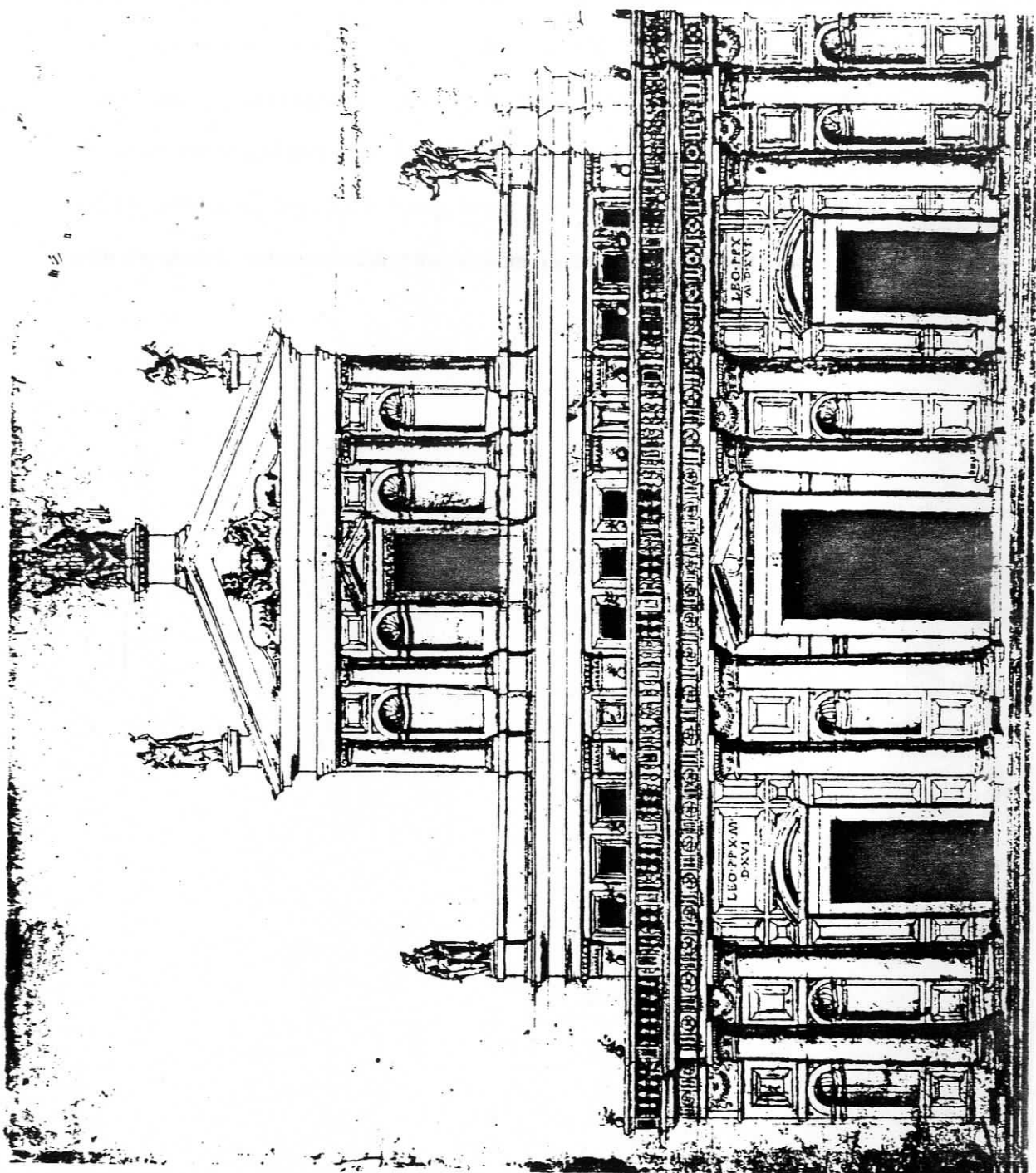
public. A ticket booth that controls all entries into the complex is needed and could be contained in the facade. One other feature of the facade will be a sun dial a tradition a device that Santa Maria Novella that increases the public nature of the facade and piazza. A new paving pattern for the piazza could be part of the sun dial in order to connect the horizontal facade of the piazza and the vertical facade of the church.

Alzato della Facciata di S. Lorenzo, cavato da un Modello

di Legno fatto col disegno, & assistenza di Michelagnolo.



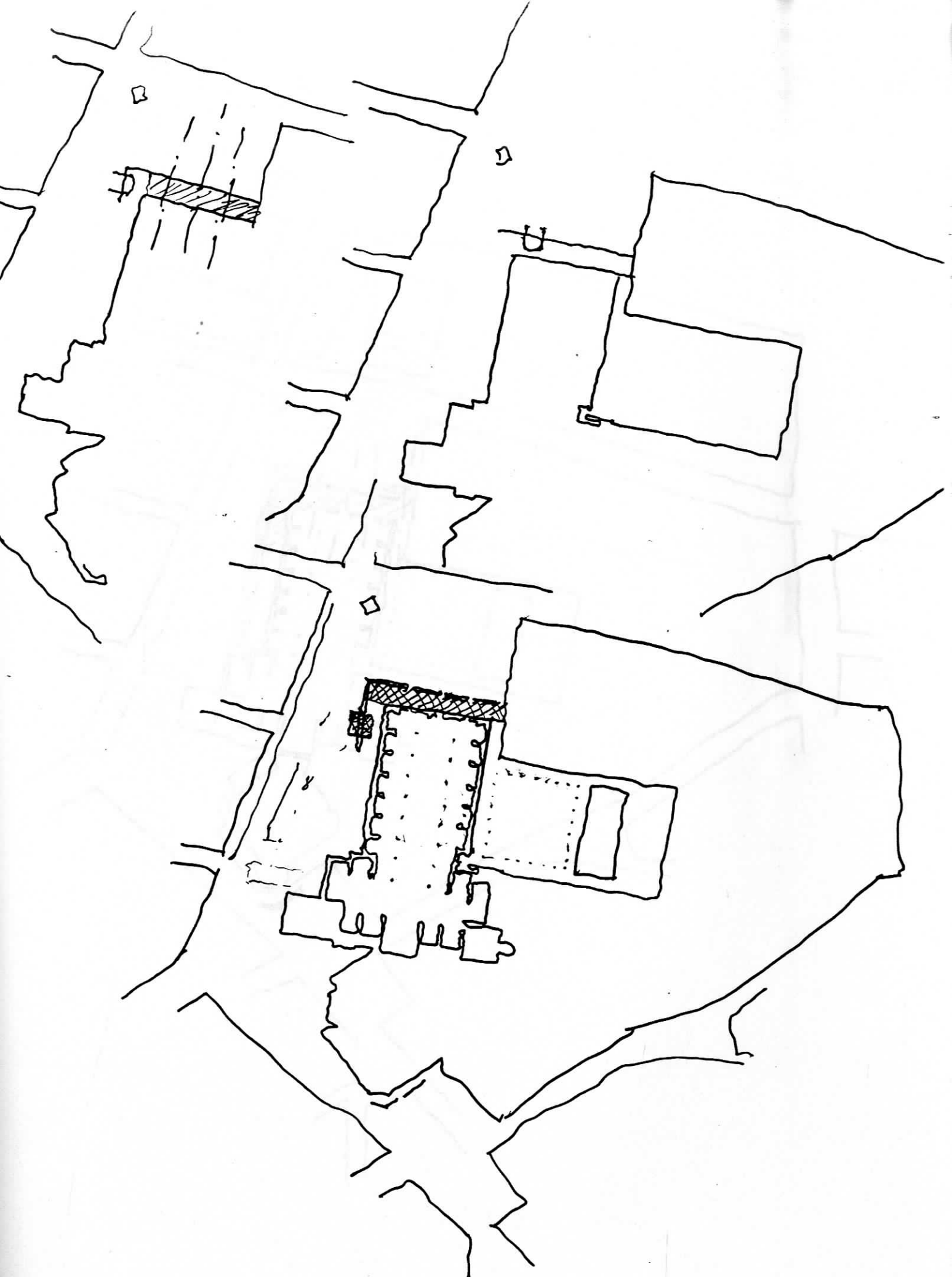


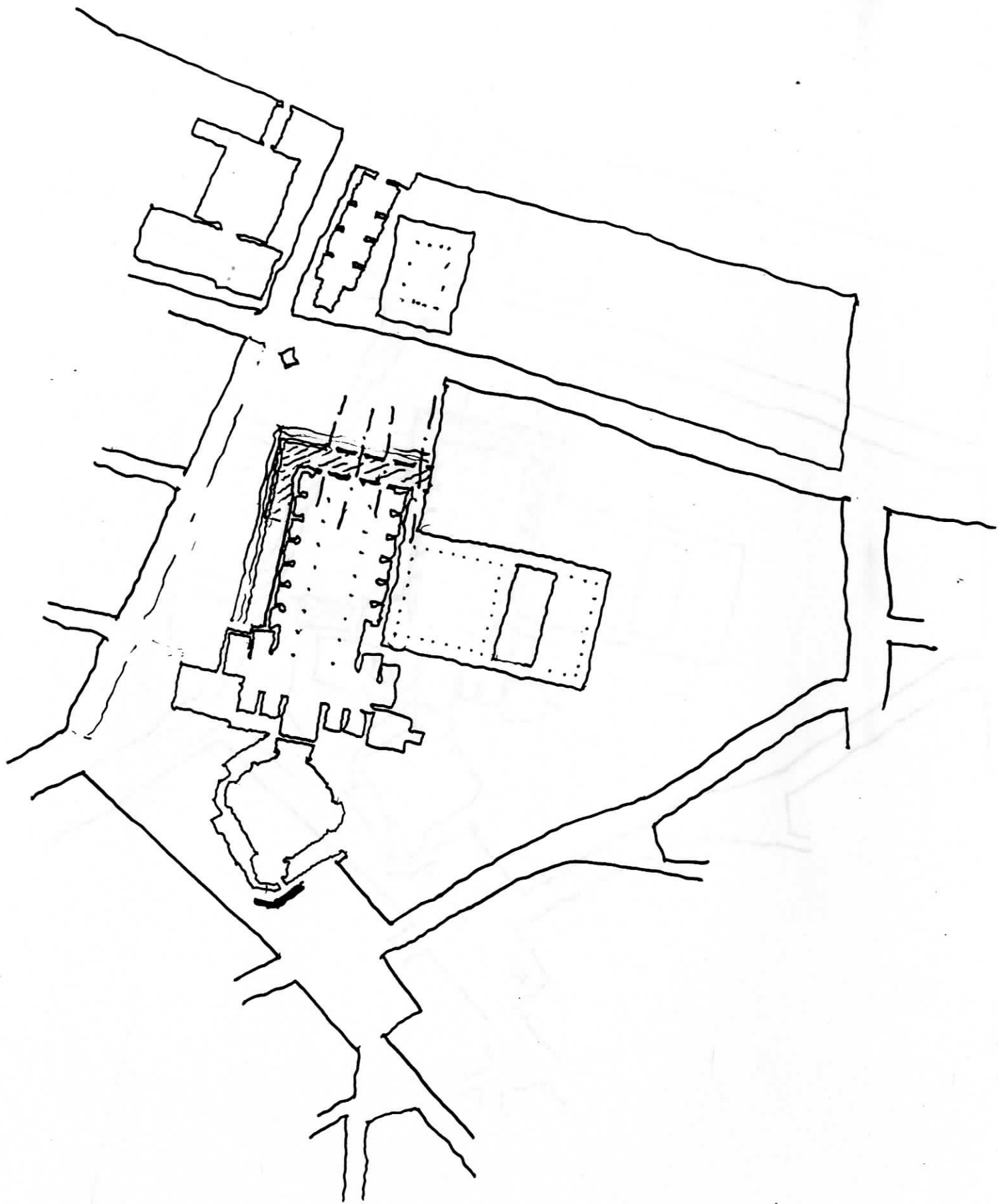


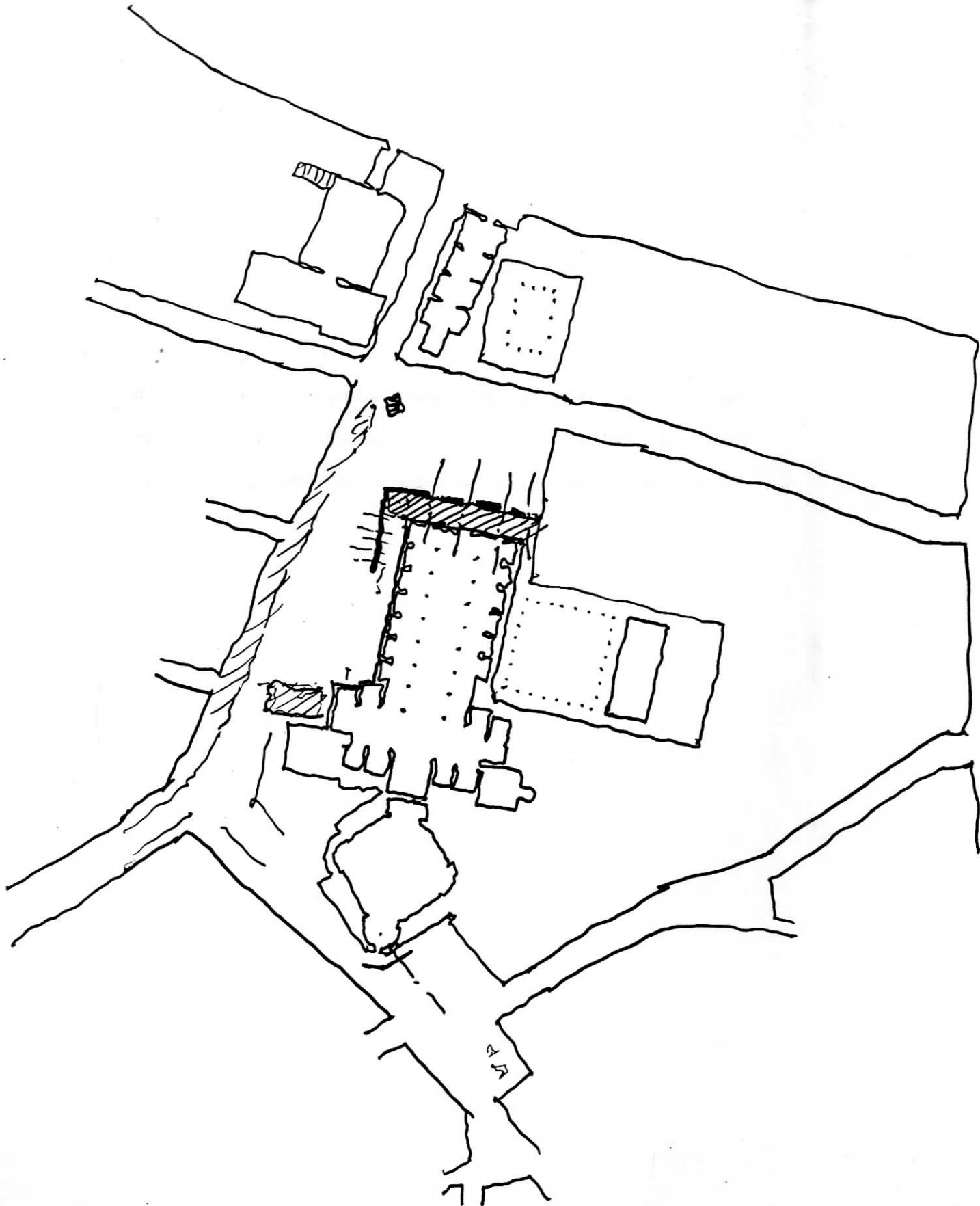
Leopoldo, Kaiser von Österreich
1859

-Parti

The space in-between becomes very important. It is in-between the past and the present, in-between the current facade and my facade. This is why it is important to create a space in front of the current facade. It must be experienced to allow the visitor to understand and appreciate the time difference. Therefore the new facade will be pulled away from the building, to allow the facades to read independently with the space in-between uniting the surfaces, uniting the periods of time.





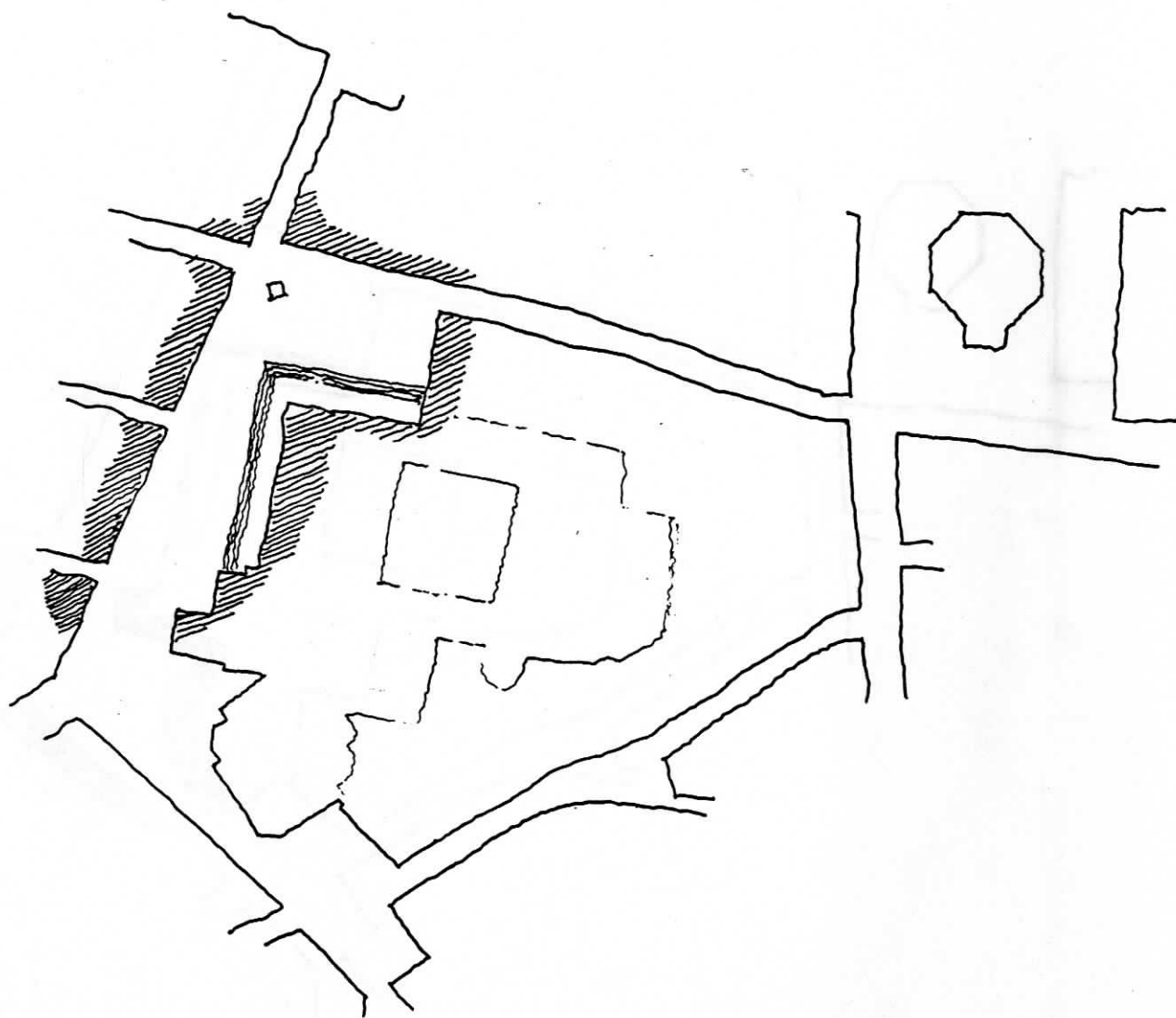


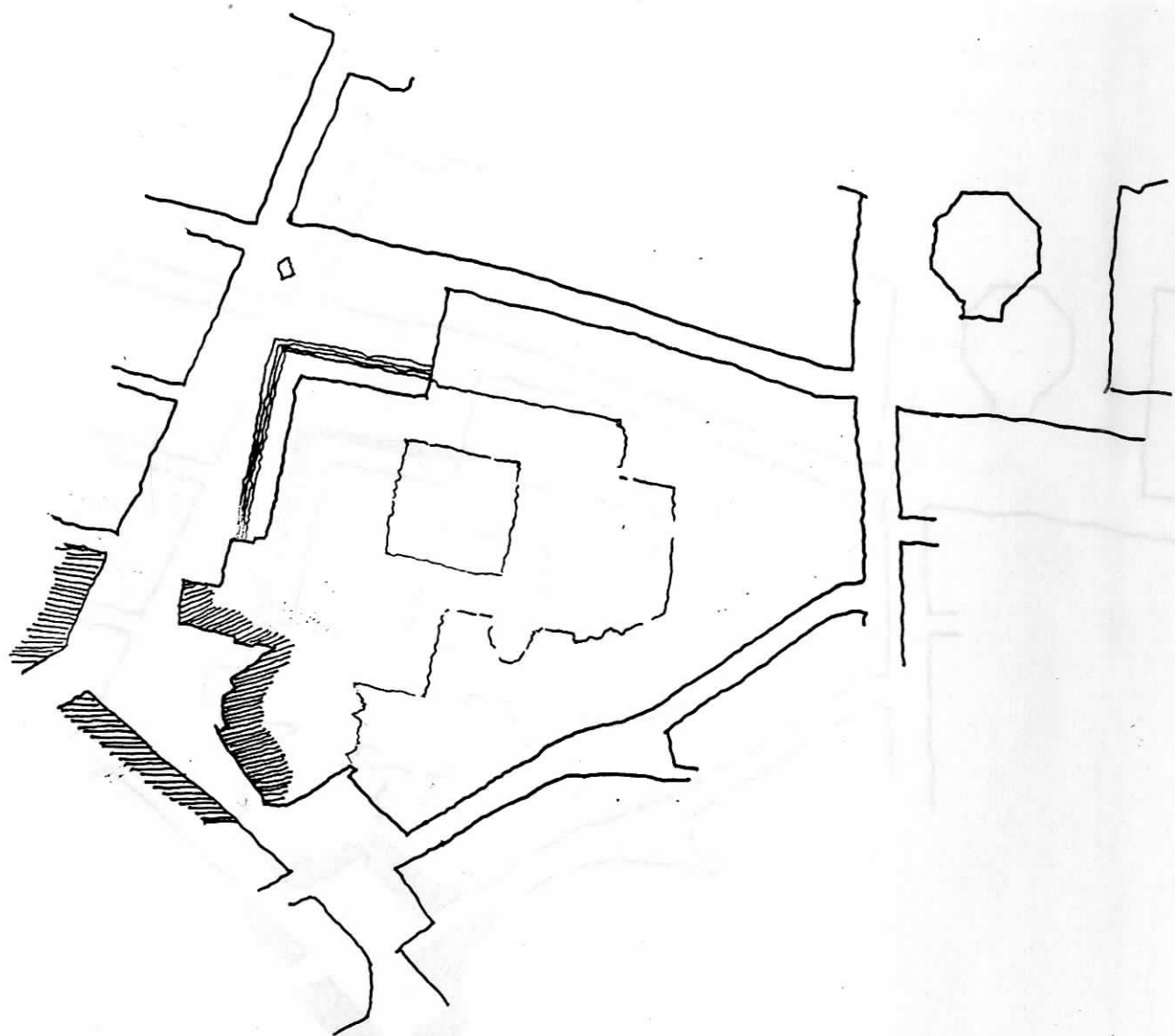
-Piazza

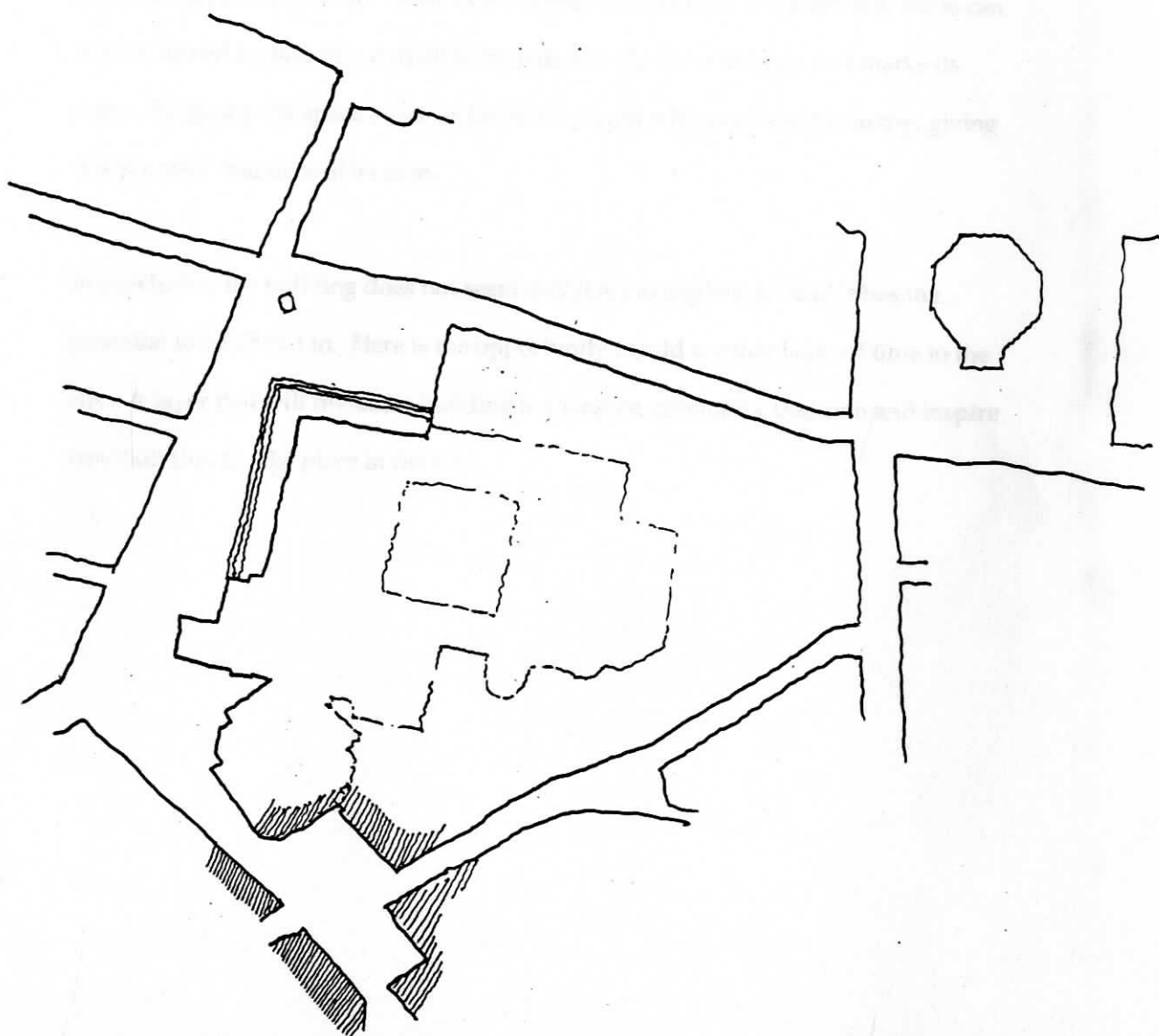
The piazza is an irregular shape that allows the church to be read as a clear figure.

At times it reads as one continuous space that surrounds the church. At other times there seems to be smaller figures that make up the entire space around the church.

The difference in the piazza when the market is open and when the piazza is empty is a unique characteristic. The temporary nature of the market could be utilized to allow both characteristics of the piazza to read clearly. So by bring people into the space north of the church behind where the stalls currently sit, will force the market to change its shape, and begin to clearly define the L-shaped piazza north of the nave.



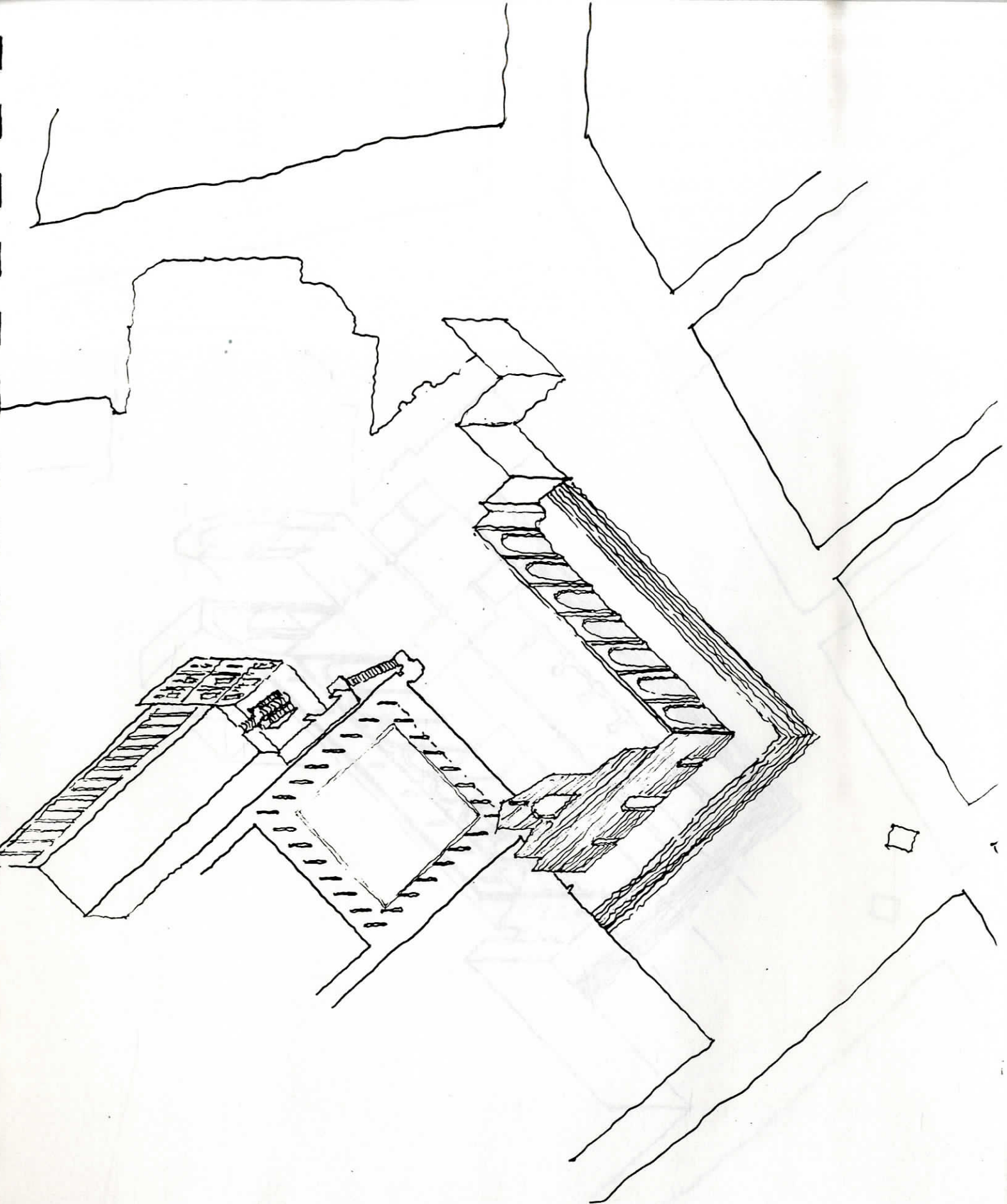


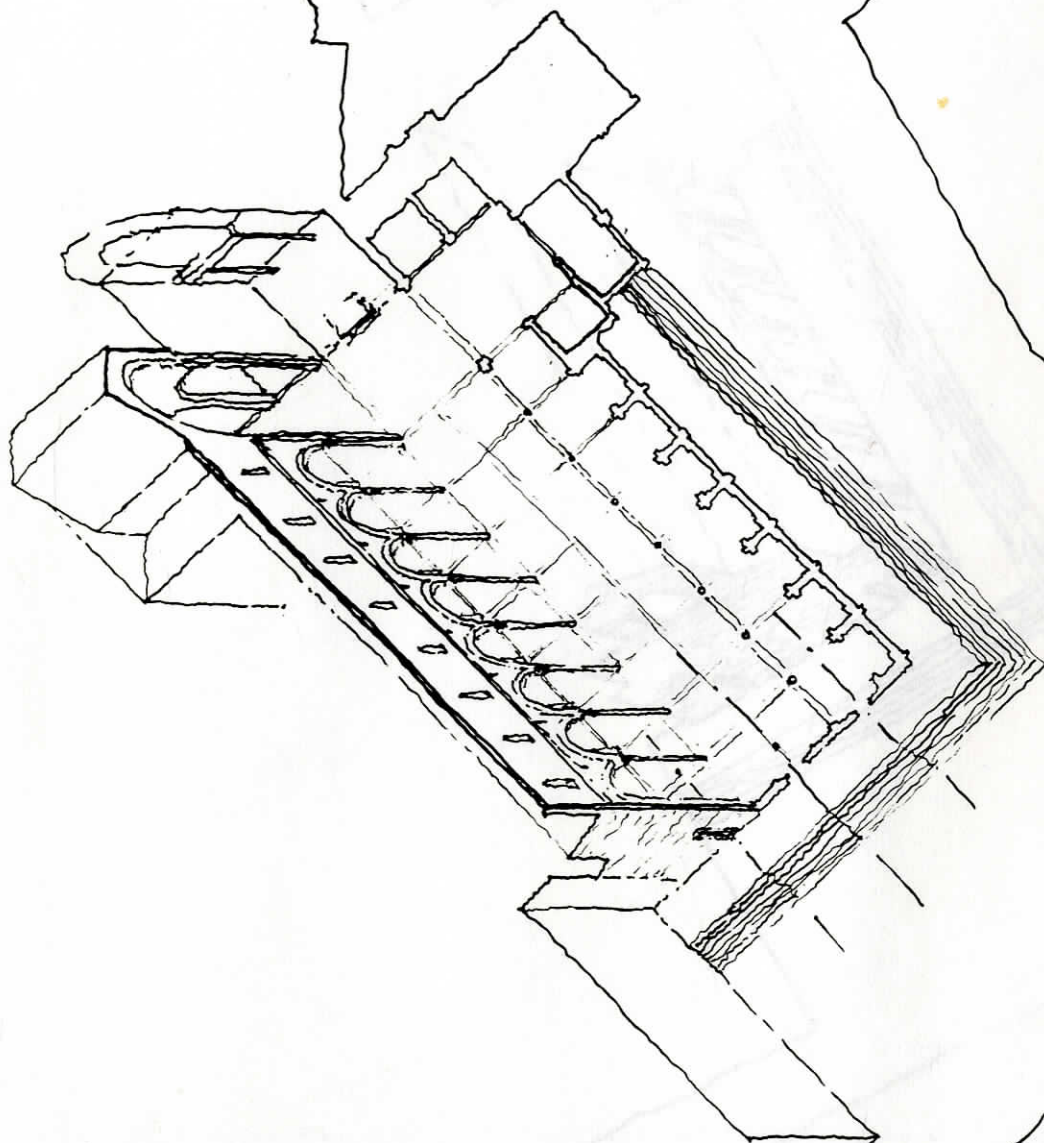


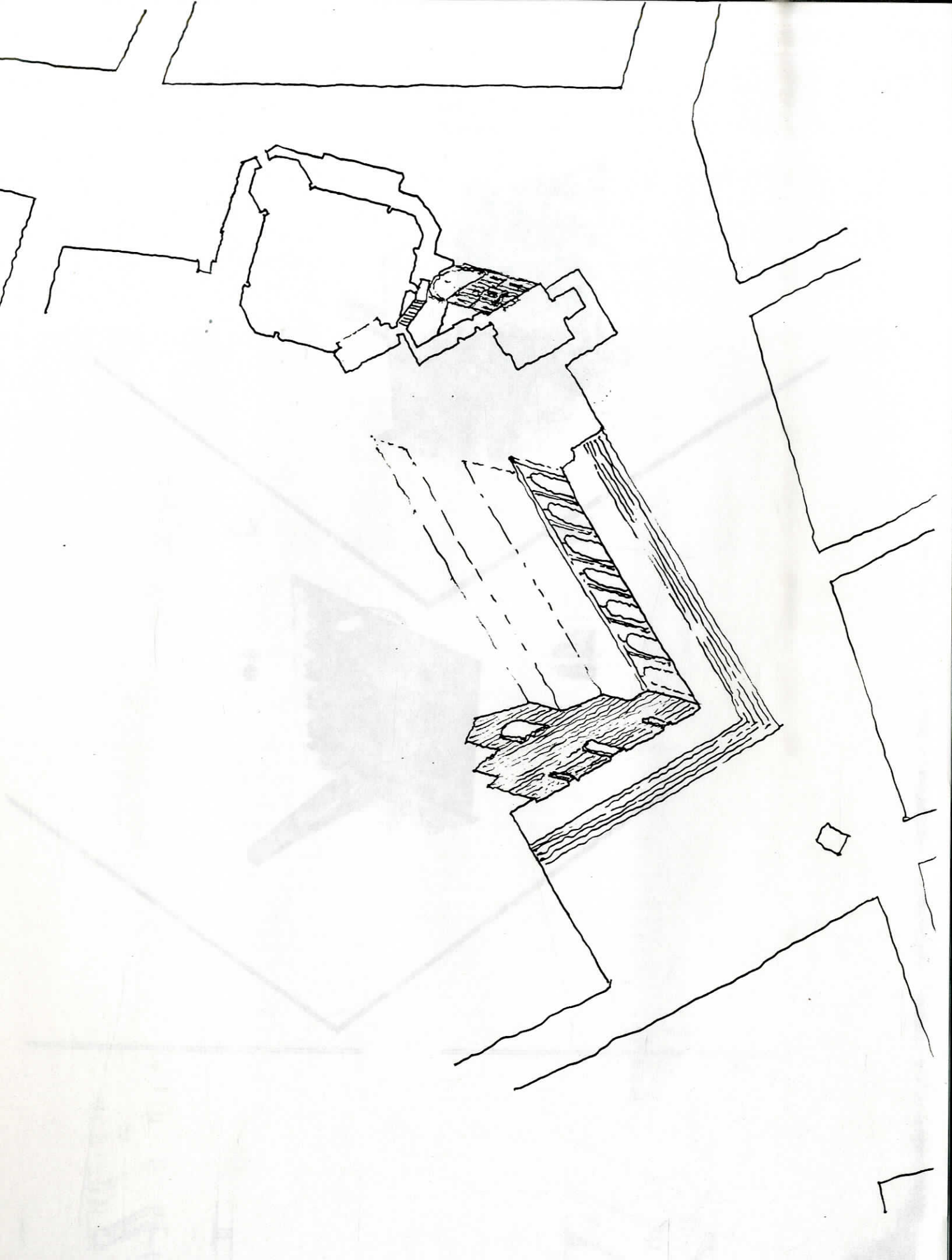
-Sequence

Three different sequences are present at San Lorenzo. The most important is the sequence into the church. Three entries allowing the public to filter into the church, perpendicular to the facade. The second is the sequence into the courtyard and up to the library, running parallel to the facade. The third is the sequence into the New Sacristy, separated from the other two but just as important. All three sequences can then be linked by building a small entry gate into the New Sacristy that marks its entry. By giving the space a face or focus the piazza will now have hierarchy, giving this piazza a character of its own.

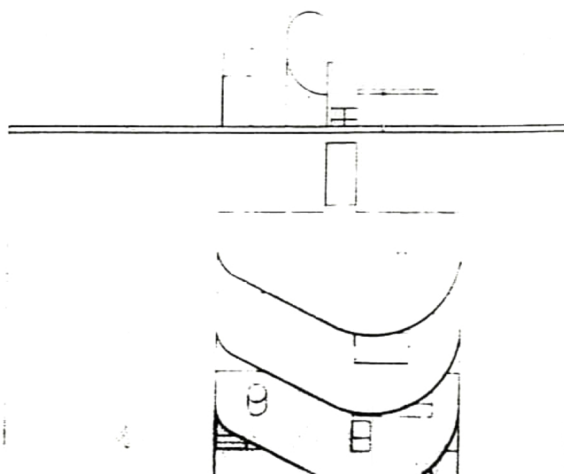
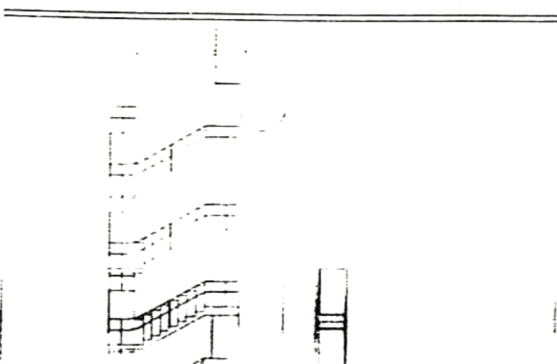
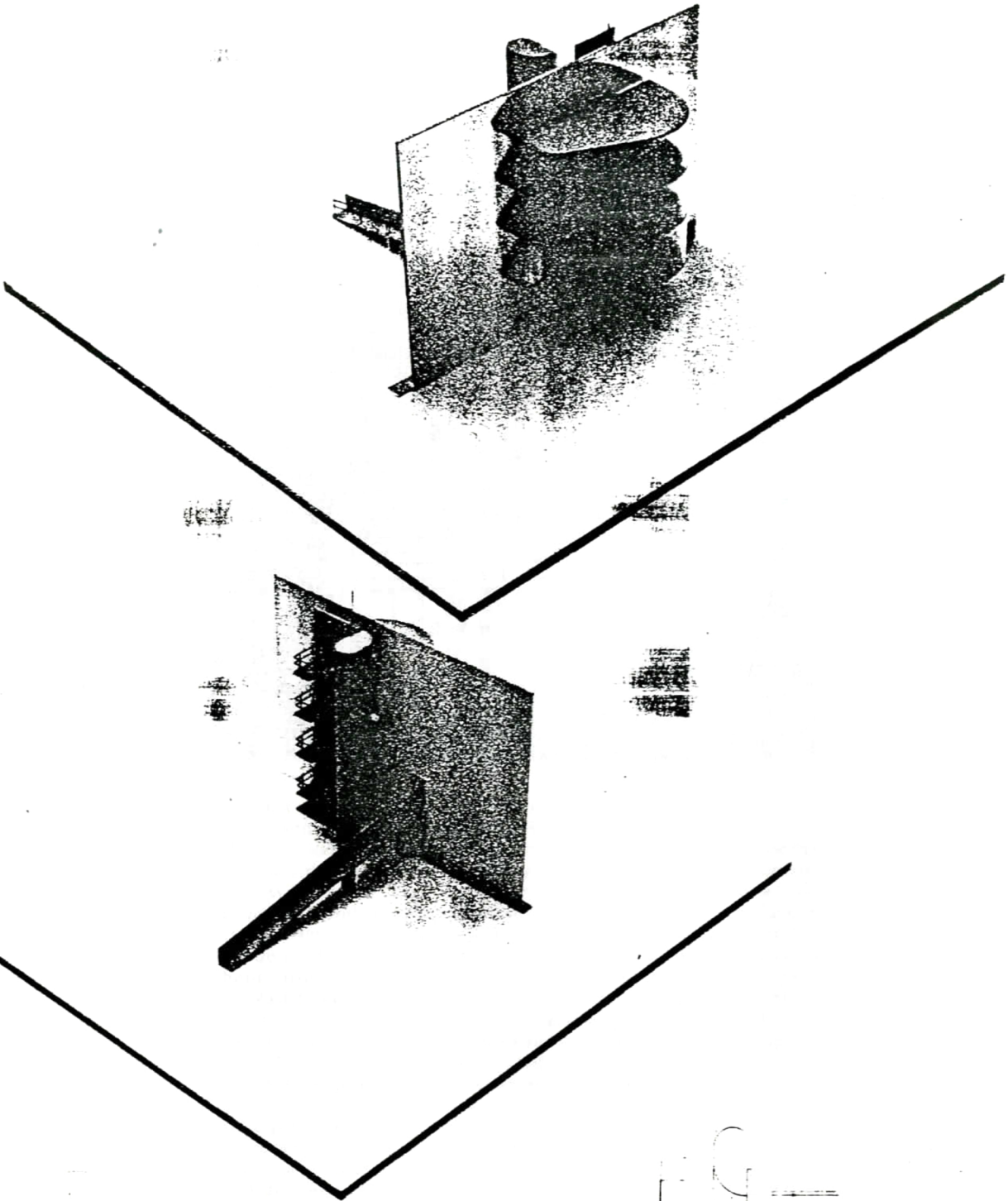
In conclusion the building does not seem as if it is incomplete, instead it has the potential to be added to. Here is the opportunity to add another layer of time to the city. A layer that will revitalize building in Florence, continue a tradition and inspire new building to take place in the city.



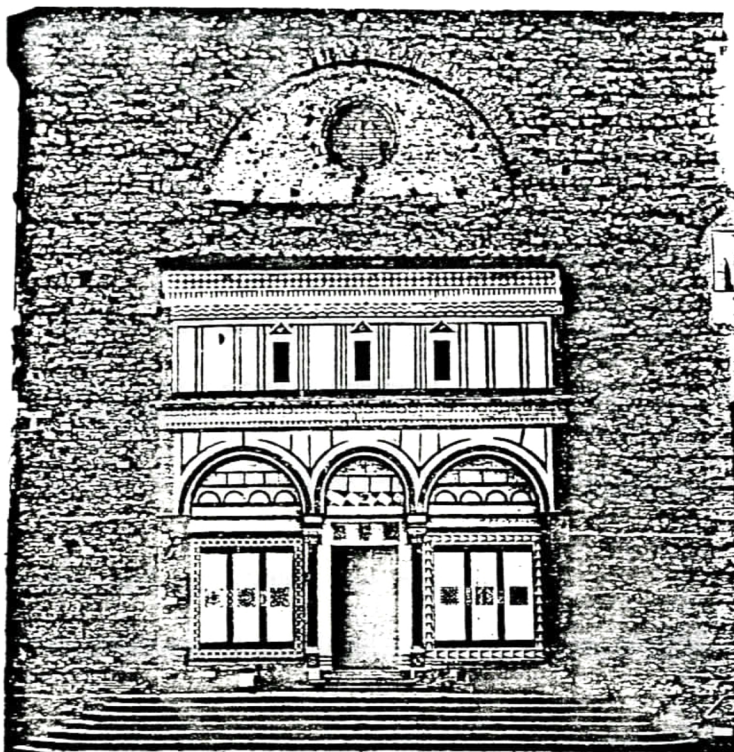




Wall House I
Model
Projections



11.
LA BADIA FIESOLANA
Fiesole, via di Badia dei Roccettini
BUS 7



Di origine altomedievale, la Badia fu riedificata tra il 1025 e il 1028, anno in cui divenne sede dei vescovi di Fiesole.

Della primitiva stesura romanica rimane soltanto la facciata, inserita in un secondo tempo nella neutra superficie del fronte rinascimentale: questa, sviluppata su due livelli segnati da una cornice modanata e scandita da uno pseudonartece a tre arcate cieche, presenta una commistione di motivi desunti dal romanico fiorentino (partitura della superficie secondo moduli geometrici, riduzione dei motivi architettonici da tri a bidimensionali mediante proiezione sul piano della facciata, apparato plastico-decorativo dicromo, inserimento nella partitura lineare di elementi desunti dalla grammatica classica, quali frontoni, architravi e cornici) e pisano (arco mediano a sesto rialzato più piccolo rispetto ai laterali a tutto sesto, portale con stipiti lisci e basi sagomate), che la collocano tra gli esempi più interessanti del romanico maturo.

L'interno, realizzato nel primo Rinascimento, è ad unica navata con transetto e presbiterio; le ampie volte impostano direttamente sulla candida superficie muraria scandita da lesene.

Annesso alla chiesa l'ampio convento rinascimentale, in origine residenza di Cosimo il Vecchio, che conserva motivi di notevole interesse quali il chiostro e il refettorio. [E. P.]

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